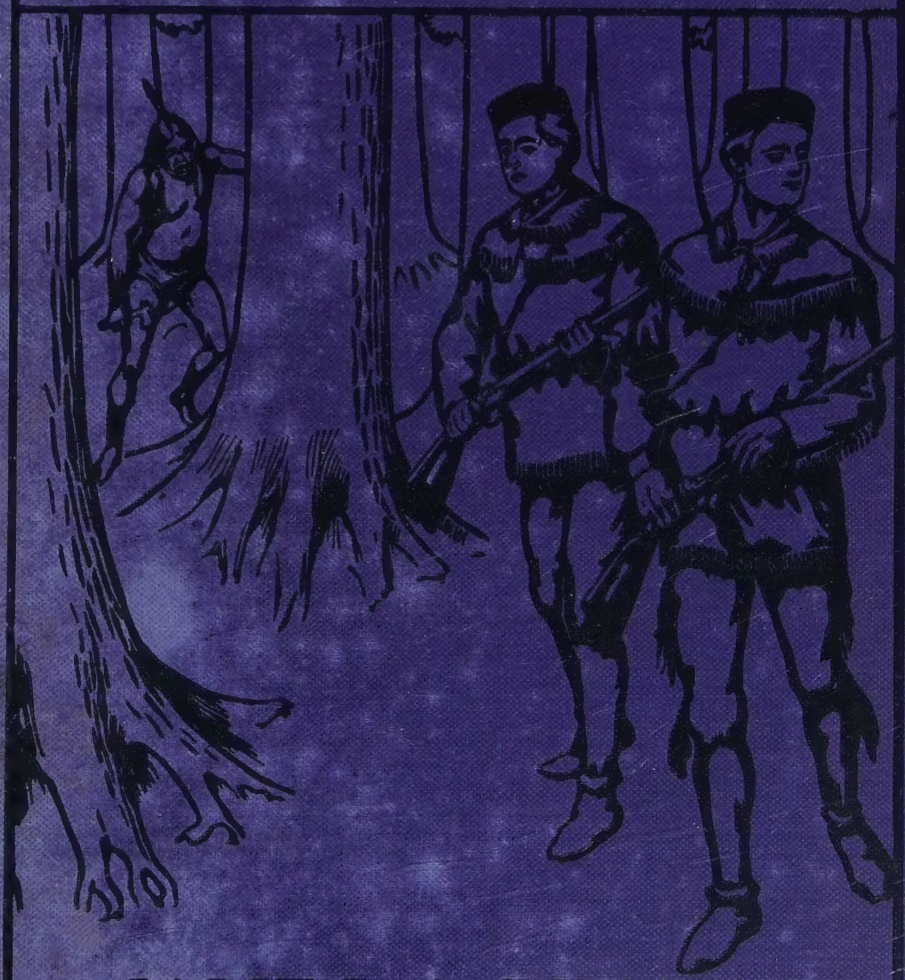
The LONE INDIAN



JAMES A. BRADEN

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James
Evans
Return if
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Everett Penna.

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Hall by James
Evans Return if
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Evans 417 East Main

He fired two shots in rapid succession

THE LONE INDIAN

By JAMES A. BRADEN

AUTHOR OF

"CONNECTICUT BOYS IN THE WESTERN RESERVE,"
"FAR PAST THE FRONTIER," "THE
AUTO BOYS," ETC.

FRONTISPIECE BY
W. HERBERT DUNTON

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THE LONE INDIAN

CHAPTER I

FLYING FISH'S CLEVER SHOT.

What John Jerome would not have given to have his hands and feet free and his trusty rifle in his possession, when he heard a gun discharged and saw Dexter leap and fall, dying, would be hard to tell. In genuine fear, as he realized the horror and helplessness of his situation, should Indians, or whoever the attacking party might be, rush up to the cave, he rolled over and over to the darkest crevice into which he could squeeze himself, at the farthest end of the shallow cavern.

All was quiet. Somewhere near him he could hear water falling drop by drop in the warm recesses of the earth, but nothing else. And then

the thought came to him that it might have been Ree who fired. He knew his chum would be searching for him. He was tempted, as this hope rose in his heart, to sound their whistle call, but hesitated. That he did so was fortunate.

Stealthily peering around the rocky walls of his prison John in another minute saw the painted face of the lone Indian. In his teeth he held a dirty, blood-stained knife.

In a fever of suppressed excitement and fear lest he be seen, the lad in the dimmest corner crouched closer to the wall. But the eyes of Killdeer were filled with the white glare of the snow; he could not see into the deeper portions of the cave, nor did he try, seemingly, only satisfying himself that no one was there, save himself and the white man whose face looked up to the sun, risen for him for the last time.

"Ugh!"

With a suppressed cry of hate, the Indian sprang upon his victim. Like lightning flashes were his movements as in his right hand the

scalping knife flew from his mouth to its horrible work, while he knelt on the corpse of Dexter.

John Jerome shivered as he saw the dexterity, the result of much practice, with which the savage cut the awful trophy he coveted from the dead man's head, and with a quick jerk of his hand threw the fresh blood from the scalp, sending it sprinkling the snow. More deliberately then, the Redskin wove the frightful evidence of his work upon a belt with other scalps. Deliberately, also, he calmly pricked with paint and a sharp piece of bone which he took from his pouch, a black circlet upon his left arm, already scarred in many places by such evidences of the bloodshed he had caused.

For more than an hour, it seemed to John, Killdeer was thus diabolically occupied, but at last he helped himself out of the powder horn and bullet pouch still fastened upon the unfortunate Dexter's body, and departed, quickly and stealthily as he had come.

Still John remained closely in his place of hiding, sick and dispirited by the terrible scene

he had witnessed. Once he struggled madly with his bonds, but he could do nothing in the narrow place into which he had pushed. Gathering courage presently, however, he crept out into a wider space. Again he tried to loosen the thongs, but could not. His failure made him desperate. Soon Duff would be returning; indeed, Dexter had apparently been looking for him when he was shot.

"I must be away from here before the old sinner gets back," the lad told himself, and began in a blind, helpless fashion sawing the rawhide which tied his wrists, against a sharp corner of a rock. But he could not see his hands and often cut them far more than he cut the tough strips holding them fast. So giving over the attempt to use the rock as a knife, he worked himself out to the mouth of the cave, hoping to find a blade of some kind. Perhaps there was one in Dexter's belt. He would see, he thought, and crept nearer.

Scouring the valley in search of game two Indian boys approached the cavern in which

Duff, Dexter and Quilling had established their winter quarters. They did not know a cave was there and would have passed it by, but for some slight movement which attracted their attention through the bushes. Simultaneously their approach was noticed by John Jerome, but he did not see them plainly through the brush, and, thinking it might be friends of Killdeer still prowling near, he ducked down, flat in the snow at the cavern's mouth.

It was this movement on John's part that fully attracted the attention of the Indian boys and they cautiously crept forward through the bushes. The little ledge before the cave was high as their heads, and they might yet have passed on, but for the tracks they discovered. Seeing these, they paused. It was then that John, guardedly glancing up, recognized them.

"Hi, there, little brothers, Flying Fish and Little Wolf," he called, "climb up here and cut me loose! And say, don't lose a minute!"

"Young Paleface!" ejaculated one of the youthful bucks from the Delaware town, out for

a long hunt, and he sprang up to the ledge. The other followed, and in a few seconds they were at John's side, vastly more astonished than they pretended to be, at what they saw—the white boy securely bound, and another Paleface dead beside him.

"Ugh," said young Flying Fish, and Little Wolf said the same.

"Well, cut me loose, friends! I may be pretty interesting to look at, but I don't enjoy the situation, you see," spoke John, just a little impatiently, and in another minute he was free.

Briefly the white boy told the little Redskins what had happened, and they replied by letting him know how Ree had been searching for him.

"Well, we will just light out of here in a hurry," John exclaimed. "Which of you chaps wants a gun? Here, this one you shall own between you. Poor Dexter will never need it again," and he gave the dead man's rifle over to his new found friends.

Great as was his desire to get away from the cave as quickly as possible, John made a hasty

but careful search for the half of the fortune letter which he knew the robbers had, before going. He found nothing, however, and recovering his own rifle, and turning to the Indian boys again, he said:

"Come along home with me and I will give you something to remember me by, for the lucky way you happened to come along just when I wanted to see you—or somebody—mighty badly." So saying, he sprang off the ledge, shutting his eyes as he passed the dead man's body, to shut out the awful sight.

With scarcely a word the Indian youths followed their white leader, traveling much more easily than he, however, for they had snowshoes, while he had none.

Knowing that Duff had set out to go to the cabin, and fearful that, if Ree were absent, as was more than likely, the fellow might do harm to the Quaker, John made the best speed possible, following Duff's tracks closely. It was already past noon, and unless the cabin was farther distant than he judged, he was likely to

meet Duff returning. For that individual, therefore, he kept his eyes wide open straight ahead and on both sides.

Failing, as he had done before, to find out from the Indian boys anything which would throw light upon the secret of the warfare Killdeer carried on, John ceased to attempt to converse with them as all three pushed forward noiselessly.

"Stand!"

The imperative order rang through a clump of bushes from somewhere on ahead, and instantly John's hand was raised to command a halt and silence.

The quick instinct of the Indian boys prompted obedience, and peering forward the young captain of the party held his breath. There was his own chum, Ree Kingdom, covered by a rifle in the hands of the scoundrel Duff.

What was to be done? He thought fast. He did not wish to kill the fellow he both feared and hated, and to fire his gun to frighten him would leave himself defenseless until he could reload.

as Dexter's rifle was not to be depended upon. Quick as wink a plan came to him.

"Flying Fish," he whispered, as the Indian boys leaned forward, observing, but unobserved by the villainous white man who faced them, while Ree, his back toward them, stood midway between—"Flying Fish, send an arrow through that Mingo head-dress the Paleface Duff, yonder, wears—quick—and don't miss!"

Scarcely was the command spoken when the Indian boy executed it. With extraordinary speed he tightened his bow string and pausing but for the twentieth part of a second to take aim, the youthful buck let fly a feathered, pointed shaft.

Swifter than the eye could follow it the arrow went. Squarely above his eyes and not more than an inch above the crown of his head the long, slender piece of rounded oak struck the band of the Indian hat of feathers Duff was wearing, and carried the head dress several yards to the rear. In great surprise Duff lowered his rifle.

With a yell of victory John leaped into the open, the Indian boys following with actual war-whoops. A shriek of terror and a curse upon his fortune burst involuntarily from the robber's lips.

"Put a ball through the black-hearted villain if he moves, Ree!" cried John, and Kingdom, scarcely less surprised than Duff himself, quickly regained his self-possession, and threw his rifle squarely in line with the fellow's heart. He held the stock to his shoulder with his right hand, while he shook hands with his dearest friend, so suddenly restored to him, not for one second, however, taking his eyes off the rascal on whom the tables had been so unexpectedly turned.

Beneath his breath Duff cursed and swore. He trembled so violently in his impotent rage the boys feared he would fall flat in the snow.

In very few words John told what had happened, while the Indian boys stood mutely by, enjoying the excitement hugely, though calm and cool as the snow drifts about them.

The mention of Dexter's name reached the ears of Duff as John briefly related his experiences. The robber listened intently. He heard John tell how Dexter had been killed and scalped, and a shudder ran through him. He glanced around as if fearful that even at that moment Killdeer might be taking aim at him; and suddenly giving way to an overwhelming impulse of fear, he ran to the boys, crying in distressing tones:

"Don't shoot! Don't—don't shoot! Honest, I never did you any harm—'Twas Dexter—Dexter and Quilling!"

"Look here, Mr. Duff, we want none of you or your company. Watch him, John," Ree spoke sternly. "Just you make the least hostile move—"

"Say, where have you been since you left your cave? You've been to our cabin, that's where you've been! Now tell what you did to Theodore Hatch! Speak up, you"—John was going to say "cut-throat," but he hated to use

so harsh a word now that the poor wretch was begging for mercy.

"I didn't see the Quaker at all—I didn't even see him. I hope to die, if I did," Duff answered. "There wasn't a soul at the cabin, and I wrote a few words on your table and came away."

"Well, what did you write? We may as well get this business transacted all at once and be done with it," put in Ree, taking no pains to conceal his dislike for the miserable creature before him.

"I wrote that not a bit of harm should come to this young man here"—jerking his head toward John—"if you would put the half of that letter you got off of Ichabod Nesbit, some place where I could get it."

"Now you look a here, Mr. Duff, and understand once and for all that that letter is not our property. It is true we found it, but we have turned it over to its rightful owner, and we do not intend to allow you to steal it from him, as you stole the other half of the letter back there at the Eagle tavern!"

"Rightful owner! Rightful owner, you say? I'd like to know who its rightful owner is! It ain't that hypocritical old Quaker, I can tell you!" and Duff added a volley of oaths to his exclamations. His temper had got away with him again and a murderous gleam in his eyes made his ugly face repulsive as a wolf's.

John smiled with a good deal of satisfaction as he thought how the villain's plan had been thwarted and how unsuccessfully the fellow had plotted to do him injury if the ransom demanded—the letter—were not forthcoming.

"I guess you won't hurt me very much even if you don't get the letter, will you, Duff?" he said. "What shall we do with him, Ree? Make him hand over the part of that letter which he has, I say! Shall we?"

"We will turn him over to Killdeer if he ever comes near the cabin again, or annoys Theodore Hatch in any way," Ree answered decisively. Then turning to Duff, he said:

"We would be justified in hanging your good-for-nothing carcass on a tree for the brutal mur-

der of our friend Black Eagle, but we are going to let you go. And what you better do is to get back to the settlements just as fast as you can. You led Quilling and Dexter to their deaths and you will lose your own life if you stay here. You needn't hope to get hold of that writing that the Quaker has because he will not give it up, and it is only because it has caused too much trouble already that we don't make you give up the part of the letter which you have. But you better leave these parts. Killdeer will kill you if you don't. You probably don't know that he saw you murder poor old Black Eagle."

"He—saw me—that blasted Indian saw me." —Duff's voice sank to a frightened whisper. "I could tell you something," he went on, recovering himself with a great effort, and abruptly changing the subject. "I could tell you young chaps something, but you wouldn't believe me, and it would do no good. That letter belongs to me. No, I knew you wouldn't believe me, but you'll live to be sorry you didn't, you'll see."

"I think you better be going. You should

want to take care of Dexter's body before it is dark, and the wolves may be there ahead of you, now," said John, quietly. He was anxious to be alone with Ree, and to hurry home.

Without a word Duff put his rifle over his shoulder and plodded off through the snow. His face was haggard, his figure bent with fatigue and endurance, and in the ill-fitting Indian dress he wore he made a most forlorn spectacle.

"Long-knife Duff goin' to die pretty quick," observed one of the Indian lads. "Heap sick."

Not once did Duff look back. When he was out of sight, the two boys, followed by their Indian friends, set out at a brisk walk for home.

"I do not understand what Duff meant by saying the Quaker was not at the cabin. It worries me some," said Ree. "But it may be that Mr. Hatch saw the fellow coming and hid somewhere."

"And what did Duff mean by saying he had more right to that letter than Cousin Theodore?" John put in.

"Oh, he was only talking. How could it be

otherwise?'' said Ree in a tone that seemed to settle the matter; but long afterward he wished most earnestly that he had been less hasty in his judgment; that he had at least asked Duff to tell by what right he laid claim to the letter the Quaker had.

"Friend Hatch hasn't a very big fire going, at any rate,'' said John when the cabin came in sight and he saw no smoke coming from the chimney.

Ree made no answer, but walked faster. It was almost night, and if the Quaker had been carried off or killed, it would be well to know it while daylight lasted.

Together the boys stepped into the cabin. It was dark and silent.

"Look in the barn,'' said Ree, and led the way to the lean-to in which the horses were kept. The Quaker's mare was not there.

"Perhaps he has gone to the Delaware town,'' John suggested.

"Hello, here are Phœbe's tracks, and they go in the very opposite direction,'' Ree exclaimed

at the same moment, in answer. "Now what can the old fellow be up to? Surely he isn't riding out for his health!"

"Ugh, see horse!" grunted Little Wolf, and pointed to the north.

There was Phœbe, galloping toward the cabin, riderless, the saddle stirrups flying loose at her side. In another minute the mare had reached the cabin, neighing and stamping her feet, plainly trying to speak.

"Where's the Quaker, Phœbe? Where's your master?" said John, patting the animal's forehead.

A look of intelligence shone in the mare's eyes in answer and she started off at a trot in the direction whence she had come, looking back and stopping, when no one followed.

"Baked beans and johnnycake!" exclaimed John excitedly. "I believe Killdeer has been trying to kill the Quaker again, and this time has succeeded!"

"It looks bad—mighty bad. Build up a good fire, John, and get some supper ready, and I'll

follow the mare; she may not go far," Ree answered.

Without more ado he started, and Phœbe, seeing him coming, trotted slowly on again, neighing plaintively.

CHAPTER II

A THOROUGHLY BAD INDIAN.

The intelligence shown by the Quaker's dapple-gray was marvelous. Seeing that Ree was not keeping up, as she trotted through the snow, the mare stopped and waited until he reached her side. Still she did not move, but seemed to be trying to tell her friend to climb into the saddle.

"Want me to ride, do you, Phœbe? All right," Ree said, and the moment his feet were in the stirrups, the horse started on though the reins fell loose upon her neck.

"I expect that if Theodore Hatch knew he was separated from his saddle bags he would die of worry if nothing else," thought Ree, as he

noticed that the Quaker's most valued possessions were securely fastened to the saddle. Deeply the boy pondered, also, upon the mysterious absence of the old gentleman, and thinking of the strange events of the day and knowing from John's story that the lone Indian was in the vicinity, he greatly feared, as his chum had suggested, that Killdeer had killed the Quaker at last, or that Duff, perhaps, had lied when he said he had not seen Mr. Hatch.

"I'd better be watching out for the Redskin myself," the boy mentally declared, as the dapple-gray carried him farther and farther into the rough, broken country to the north of the cabin. But he was very weary with his recent exertions and genuinely disappointed that instead of the rest and supper before the blazing fire, to which he had looked forward from the time he had found John, he must now be still out in the cold, still hungry and still searching for one whom he feared he would find dead. It was almost dark now and the air was sharp and frosty. He had not minded the cold so much

while walking, but riding chilled him thoroughly.

"Phœbe, I'll take a run by your side," the boy exclaimed, and quick as the thought flung himself to the ground.

Never in his life had Ree done a more fortunate thing. His quick, impulsive action undoubtedly saved his life. At the very moment he jumped from the saddle a bullet whizzed where his head had been an instant before, the ball whistling most threateningly in the crisp air.

The sudden danger startled Ree tremendously, and his benumbed limbs being awkward, he lost his balance and fell headlong into the snow.

From the shelter of some scrubby trees along a ridge fifty yards away, an Indian ran forward as Ree fell, and with a smothered cry of triumph raced toward the boy. It was Killdeer, and his belief that his shot had tumbled the white boy from his horse, nearly cost him his life.

Getting to his feet, Ree saw the savage run-

ning nearer. With a little yell of surprise the Redskin turned to dart away again, as he discovered that his intended victim was not dead, but instantly the boy's rifle was at his shoulder. Quick as lightning his eye measured the distance to the fleeing Indian, and he fired.

Killdeer was running zigzag and making the most of every tree whose trunk he could put between himself and Ree; but the deep snow retarded his movements, usually so fleet, and—he knew no more. The bullet laid him low.

There was no thought of triumph or gladness in Ree Kingdom's mind as he saw the Indian pitch forward into the drifts. It was the first time he had killed a human being except in the heat of battle, he reflected, and it made him shudder to think of it, though he was well aware that Killdeer had meant to kill him.

With a word to the horse, which had gone but a few steps, then stopped, the boy was going forward to sēe whether the Indian was dead or only wounded, when he heard a voice he recognized not a hundred yards away, crying:

"Help! Help!"

It was the Quaker. Where could he be? Phœbe recognized the voice and with an appealing look toward Ree, went in the direction of the call. The boy hurried after her.

If Ree had been anything but quiet and sober by nature, he would have laughed outright over the discovery made. As it was he could not resist a smile, and he smiled more broadly still as he thought how John would have laughed.

Theodore Hatch was imprisoned in a wolf pen. At a glance Ree saw it all. He had climbed into the pen to arrange the bait and the massive lid had fallen, shutting him in.

"Verily, I am glad thou art come! What torments I have suffered, and what dangers!"

"Well, you can thank your mare for it, Mr. Hatch. We would never have known where to look for you, but for her. Rise up now, and help me lift the lid. We sometimes kill wolves with a knife fastened in a pole before we open the pen, but you probably would not relish that."

Ree had completely recovered his composure and as he talked he was raising the heavy cover of the pen which shut the Quaker in. The wolf trap was made of logs in the form of a large box. Over the top was a heavy cover of small logs bound together, which was so arranged that, being left half open, it would fall as wolves or other animals pulled at the bait fastened to a spindle inside. The lid was heavy of necessity, and one man could scarcely manage it alone.

"As thou wert away I thought to visit and set the traps for thee. The lid came down on me whilst I was putting the bait in place. Verily, I thought I should die. I called and called for help, then at last feared to call again lest I bring down the savages or those robber white men upon me. And I heard two shots just as you came, and it filled me with fright—wert thou shooting, or who?"

The Quaker was out of the trap by this time, half-frozen but mightily pleased to be rescued. He shook both Ree's hands, but not before he

had given Phœbe a kinder caress and whispered his thanks to her.

"Yes, our old friend the vanishing Indian and I had a little skirmish," Ree answered to the Quaker's question. "He did not vanish quite quick enough this time. The snow bothered him, poor fellow."

Leading the mare and compelling Mr. Hatch to walk to get his blood in circulation and give him warmth, Ree led the way to where Killdeer lay.

The snow in the Indian's long, black hair was found stained with blood, but the body still heaved with the breath of life.

"He is not dead but pretty badly stunned," said Ree, kneeling beside the savage. "It is too dark to see how badly he is hurt. Lead the mare up, we will take him to the cabin, and maybe we can fix him up."

"Kill him! kill him! Has he not tried to murder all of us?" cried Theodore Hatch, turning his head away and rubbing his hands distressfully.

"But maybe we can civilize him," Ree suggested, a little crossly.

The Quaker made no response, but stood idly by while Kingdom lifted up Killdeer's unconscious form, and, thanks to his strong back and arms, was able to place the body astride the mare.

"Now let's walk fast, Mr. Hatch. John will be worried. I only hope he did not hear the shooting!"

The Quaker seemed to be sorry for the way he had spoken in urging the death of Killdeer, before the cabin was reached, and in a half-hearted way apologized to Ree. But he said as he did so:

"Now had it been that rascal Duff whom thou hadst wounded, I could wish him no mercy. Yea, I wish it were he who had been shot that we might obtain the writing to make my poor aunt's torn letter complete."

Ree made no answer, though he thought much over the Quaker's changeable manner—how one day he was wanting to be a missionary among

the Delawares, and the very next day seeking the life of a fellow being for the sake of securing hidden wealth of uncertain quantity and value; how on several occasions he had refused to try to recover the valuable writing stolen from him, and yet now wished for Duff's death that the letter might be obtained. It was all very strange.

The astonishment of John Jerome as Ree carried Killdeer, still unconscious, into the cabin in his arms and placed him gently upon his own bunk in the corner was complete. The two Indian boys, who were to remain with the young pioneers all night, were scarcely surprised. All three recognized the savage at once. No one, indeed, who had even seen the hideously painted features of the Redskin could forget them.

With Indian stolidity, however, Little Wolf and Flying Fish said not a word. With John it was different.

"My stars, Ree!"

The three short words expressed a great deal. They asked, without directly doing so, "What

has happened?" and "Why did you bring that murderer here?"

"He thought he had picked me off the mare, and I wounded him as he was running up to get a lock of my hair," Ree explained with a grim smile. "He has only a scalp wound, I guess, and when he comes to we will see if we can't civilize him. At least we will find out the reason for this secret war he carries on against all white people."

"If he don't kill us all in our beds and hang our hair on that belt of his!" John ejaculated.

The remark made Ree shiver, for as the words were spoken the flap of the loose shirt-like coat the savage wore was turned back, revealing nearly a dozen of the awful trophies of his attacks on hunters, settlers and Palefaces wherever he found them.

John did not see these things. He had stepped out to the barn to help Theodore Hatch feed his mare a spare quantity of the coarse hay remaining, and the next minute his long, hearty laugh indicated that he had learned from that

gentleman the adventure the latter had had in trying to set the wolf trap.

A hot venison stew made a grand supper for the two friends, the Quaker and their guests, the Indian lads, that night, and as they ate there was much to talk about, so full of adventures for all had the day been.

Uppermost in the mind of John, however, was the terrible picture his thoughts presented—the body of Dexter lying cold in death at the mouth of the lonely cave, and the knowledge that the murderer was at the present moment lying unconscious within hand's reach, his wounded head tied up and resting on the best pillow the cabin afforded.

In Ree's thoughts the ashy color of the disfigured face of Duff as he learned of the death of Dexter was the one thing ever foremost. And Theodore Hatch was thinking more than for a long time of the prospect that the missing half of the hidden-fortune letter would yet fall into his hands without effort on his part. With his mysterious saddle bags for a cushion he seemed

quite comfortable in these reflections, and as John reminded him that it was probably his cries for help which had attracted Killdeer to the vicinity of the wolf pen, he declared his intention of quitting so hostile a country as soon as he could secure the writing known to be in Duff's possession.

The old gentleman was visibly worried by the presence of the wounded Indian and not once did he look toward the unconscious form on the bunk behind him.

"You want to make mighty sure he is not playing 'possum,'" said John to Ree, half jokingly, half in earnest, referring to Killdeer. "You bet I'll sleep with one eye open!"

"We will take care of that," Ree answered, and with the lines from Neb's harness he tied the Indian's body to the bed in such a way that the fellow would not be greatly discommoded, but yet could not move far without attracting attention.

On the floor beside the Indian boys Ree made his bed, while John lay down beside the Quaker,

and nearly caused the old gentleman to suffer nervous prostration by humorously asking if he might not have the saddle bags for a pillow.

If Killdeer regained consciousness during the night, no one knew it. The Seven Sleepers slept no more soundly than did the weary occupants of the far-away cabin.

The Indian seemed still insensible when the boys arose, but as Ree bathed his face and forehead with cold water, he opened his eyes. There was not, however, any sign of recognition in them, and he made no resistance as some broth was fed him.

Another change had come over Theodore Hatch during the night. He was again anxious for the welfare of the Delawares, and he and John accompanied Little Wolf and Flying Fish to the town, the boy pioneers first bestowing upon the young bucks presents of knives, which they greatly prized. Of course the Quaker made the journey on horseback. Of course he took his saddle bags with him; but he said in confidence to Ree as he started:

"I may make my home with the Delawares, doing what good I can. I have sinned and I have coveted earthly riches. Twice hast thou saved my life. I cannot repay thee, but I can give my services to these poor Indians, who are our friends, and—another day I will tell thee more."

Sorrowfully the old man shook his head.

The cold weather, it seemed, had spent itself. This day the wind blew from the south and there was every indication of a genuine January thaw. The water ran in rivulets from the cabin roof and by night, when John and the Quaker safely returned, a warm rain was falling. Ree had spent the day without adventure, keeping close to the cabin to care for his prisoner patient.

The Indian gained consciousness during the evening as the boys and Mr. Hatch were seated before the cheery fireplace. The instant Ree discovered the savage trying to sit up, he was at his side.

"Lie still. You are badly hurt and we will make you well," he said, kindly.

"Heap big fool," was the savage's ungrateful reply, scowling venomously in his benefactor's face, and John, who had little faith in his chum's plan to reform the Redskin, smiled, and winked at Mr. Hatch. The latter looked sorrowful, however, and rubbed his hands.

As the weather became very mild and the rain continued all night and most of the next day, the Cuyahoga became a wide, deep, swiftly moving stream. Ree and John boldly launched their canoe, however, in spite of the dangers from floating ice.

Going down stream they did well enough; coming back it was hard work indeed, struggling against the current, though they bent their stout ash paddles almost to the point of breaking. They told the Quaker of the adventure when at supper. Afterward Mr. Hatch told them in whispers that in their absence Killdeer, whom he had been left to watch, had made a desperate attempt to free himself, after having lain all day

in sullen silence, refusing even to eat and rejecting all kindnesses. His struggles had begun when he chanced to discover that the scalp was missing from the Quaker's head.

"Verily, I was much frightened. He seemed for the first time to recognize me," the old gentleman confessed.

Even as he spoke a thundering blow crashed upon the rude table over which Theodore Hatch was leaning. It missed his head by a quarter of an inch and split the table squarely in two.

At the same moment a frightful yell sounded in the little cabin and the next instant a dark figure leaped through the open door and vanished. It was Killdeer.

Ree was first to recover from the sudden surprise of the attack, and, rifle in hand, he sprang into the outer air. The darkness had already fallen and he could see nothing.

One thing only was certain—the wounded Indian had slipped from under the straps bound across his body, and was gone. That he had

not killed the Quaker was by the narrowest chance.

"There is no doubt he recognized you, Mr. Hatch, and was furious to think he carried your scalp at his belt while you were still alive," said John. "I hadn't intended to tell you, but it is true that he has your scalp, for I saw it. And he has carried it away with him."

"At any rate," responded Ree, "that lone Indian will hate us more than ever, simply because he knows he has abused our kindness, and that feeling won't let him rest until he has tried again to put one or all of us out of the way."

Early that morning Ree, leaving John to tidy up the cabin, went out and after feeding the animals in the stable, looked about for any possible sign of trail that Killdeer might have made during the night. There were plain foot-tracks leading to the nearest point of woodland, but amid the shrubbery, leaves and moss these tracks vanished.

He was near the river and, still looking, Ree gradually came to the bank. The Cuyahoga

was unusually full, owing to the brief January thaw. At the place where the canoe was drawn up Kingdom saw that it had been moved. There were the prints where it had remained after the boys had pulled it up, although the traces were somewhat dimmed by the recent rain.

And yet there was the canoe resting upon the bank not more than twenty feet away, drawn up again in much the same manner as it had been before at the other place, only a trifle further down stream. Here the footprints were faintly visible, although the rain and the river's swirl had obliterated most of them.

Reporting this incident to John, the boys concluded to investigate further after breakfast. Theodore Hatch having again gone to sleep, they did not disturb him, for they knew that the sudden attack by Killdeer must have greatly unnerved him. Leaving some cooked victuals for him by the hearth, the two lads took their guns, called Ring and stationed the faithful dog on guard outside.

After scouring the skirts of the woodland

around their clearing, they came to comparatively fresh moccasin tracks near the river and not far below where the canoe was now pulled up. The tracks looked too small to be those of a man. After a step or two the tracks entered the water. "What would the maker of those tracks be doing going into the water?" queried John; but Ree, who was scanning the smooth, mushy sand surface of the water's edge gave no heed at first.

"Well, what do you make of it?" continued John.

"These tracks come from towards the canoe," said Ree. "We better go and look that ground over. I was in too much of a hurry before."

So the boys, carefully scanning the water's edge, detected here and there where some one had probably stepped carelessly, signs of further prints, partially in and partially out of the half sandy soil that lined the river's bank. By degrees they traced them—or rather Ree did—to the canoe itself. But, as before surmised, the tracks were leaving the canoe instead of en-

tering it. Nor were the tracks as large as those a man might make. Not only had the canoe evidently been pushed into the river by some one, but it had also been drawn out at another place.

"Who could it be but Killdeer?" finally enunciated John, who in matters of sheer woodcraft did not always probe deeply, trusting much to his own intuitions instead.

"Possibly so," acquiesced Ree. "But we cannot tell yet who first pushed the canoe out, owing to the rain. And from those toe tracks we followed we are tolerably certain that one of them at least was not a full grown man. Suppose we cross over, John, and see what we can find on the other side."

By stiff paddling they brought their boat ashore on the opposite bank, and had gone but a few yards along the river's edge when they saw something that caused Ree to turn inwards under the trees.

The undergrowth was so thick that it was a wonder Ree detected the evidence of what was now before their eyes. This was the ashes and

half burned sticks of an extinguished fire. Twenty yards from this and slightly below, they also found signs that the canoe had undoubtedly been landed here.

"Look here!" called John suddenly, who had been scrutinizing the earth where the fire had been kindled, thus drying and scattering loose earth and ashes along its edge. "See anything remarkable in that?"

"Looks like some fellow had patched his moccasin," was Ree's careless comment. "And—yes! Wait a jiffy, John!" Ree, now on his knees, was comparing the patched moccasin track with another larger one near by, that also was more visible than the half obliterated foot-tracks around the ashes of the fire.

"That is no more a man's track than those prints we saw on the other side. This other is bigger. Evidently two of 'em must have crossed in the canoe. One of 'em must have taken it back. It must have been the chap who made that small track. And where did the fellow that made this track go?"

"Don't ask me!" replied John wearily. "I am getting tired of all this nosing round after trails, traces, tracks and so on."

But while John was venting his discontent, Ree had circled the ashes of the fire, finally striking out northward until it is doubtful if he heard what his comrade had said. Presently Ree called back: "Come here, John!"

John went grumbling, opening with:

"You are a better tracker than I, Ree. But you didn't give me a chance to tell you whose moccasin made that print in the ashes back there."

"Well, whose moccasin was it—hey?"

"It is worn by Flying Fish. The night he and Little Wolf stayed all night I gave him a piece of deer-hide to put on a patch. Cut it out for him, in fact. That patch was just about the right size to make a track like that. But what could those boys be doing over here?"

"No proof yet that more than one of them was here."

"But—but there are two tracks—" began John, perplexedly.

"Two tracks so far as we now know: but one of them is surely a man's."

Ree continued to search for the partial trail until he came to the half dry bed of a small brook. Along this he prowled for a time, then came back to where John still moped about the extinguished fire.

"There is only one track going on north—that of a man. The brook bed shows that plainly."

They went back to where they had found signs of the canoe having first been landed. Here Ree began a careful search among the confusing tracks at the water's edge. At last he called to John, who had been rather apathetically looking on.

"See what you make of this," he remarked, pointing to two tracks at the water's edge, both turned towards the place where the bow of the canoe must have been placed.

John, crouching down, finally noticed indica-

tions that the moccasin of one track, evidently on the right foot, showed the patch. He reflected a moment.

"I guess you are right, Ree," he began. "If I remember correctly, and I am sure I do, that patch was put by Flying Fish on his right moccasin."

"Now what in the world could that lad be doing?" muttered Ree. "They take our canoe by stealth, steal across the river; then the man goes on while Flying Fish returns the canoe. Who would that boy be so friendly with that he would join with him in doing this? And what did they do all this for?"

John, also cogitating, suddenly broke forth with:

"It couldn't be one of the Delawares, for there would be no reason for secrecy. Anyone knows that we would gladly loan them the canoe. Didn't Captain Pipe give us the canoe? And yet—say, Ree! I hate to think it; but both Little Wolf and Flying Fish were friendly with Killdeer."

CHAPTER III

REE FOLLOWS A STRANGE TRAIL

"I am going to look into this a little further, John," said Ree at length. "While you must take the canoe back and look after Mr. Hatch, who is hardly fit in his condition to be left long alone at our cabin, I am going to follow up those tracks I found in the brook bed and do a little scouting as well. Killdeer is sly as well as bold. He may yet have some plan in view to bother us."

"What a wild goose chase!" exclaimed John. "I never heard the like! Who would be apt to join in with Killdeer way off in the north?"

"Well, there are some Chippewas up about the lake. You know when some of them came to trade with us they were particularly curious, and hard to bargain with. Wanted both ends

of a good trade." Ree paused reflectively, then: "But, John, be sure you return to-night, say before sundown. Bring something to eat along, for I will be pretty hungry then."

John expostulated further, but Ree had his own way in the end. The comrades soon separated at the riverside, John paddling across with vigorous strokes, while Ree turned back into the woods, feeling rather gloomy despite his deep conviction that what he was doing was the proper thing for him to do.

Meantime John, reaching the other side, pulled up the canoe and made his way up the bluff towards the cabin. All looked still and peaceful without. Ring met him joyfully, and on entering, he saw that Theodore Hatch was still slumbering soundly.

To return to Ree Kingdom, plodding slowly yet doggedly northward, trying to follow the trail he had discovered along the bed of the half dried rivulet. It was no easy matter in the first place. At times it would disappear as spots in the dry bed grew more gravelly.

This would make imperative on his part a careful search along both sides of the brooklet, causing him at times to believe that the tracks had left the stream-bed. But, often unexpectedly, he would run upon them again. Meanwhile the air grew heavier; signs of snow were more and more evident, until he wondered if it was worth while to keep up this investigation further.

"And yet," he reflected, "it seems important for us to find out if possible just what this heartless savage is up to. He tried to murder Hatch. No reason now why he would not try to murder John or me, provided he could do so safely—that is, from his own standpoint."

By the time the sun, occasionally visible, pointed towards the noon hour, Ree calculated that, including the various delays occasioned by searching for the trail when temporarily lost, he must have advanced several miles into the unknown wilderness stretching towards Lake Erie, with the full Cuyahoga flowing northward towards the left.

He had no food, but having cut and stripped a little bark from a slippery elm he ran across, he at last seated himself at the foot of a big poplar, with his feet on the bed of the nearly dry brooklet. A flicker of moist snow was swept across his face as he chewed the bark.

From where he sat his eye happened to rest upon a half buried tree root where its extremities had been washed bare when the brook was full, and he noticed that one or more strands were freshly broken, as if some heavy weight had crushed the fibers apart. Quickly he rose and pushed further up the brook bed, the snow hitting his face.

Near these broken roots there was a deep impression of a moccasined foot, as if its owner had made a sudden spring. Where had he landed? Not in the brook bed, but upon the network of small roots, part of which had broken under the weight of the sudden impact. Yes, there could be no doubt of this, for scattering signs of further scrambling were evi-

dent until the party, whoever it was, reached the big tree trunk on the level bank.

At the foot of the tree trunk there were still signs of some one having rested, perhaps slumbered, right where Ree was now looking. Though snow was beginning to fall, evidently the rains of the night before had not been so copious as at the cabin, for the trail, wherever at all visible, had been growing plainer.

Then Ree suddenly saw something that brought the blood to his face while his pulses quickened. Down in a crevice between roots and briars was a long stringy something that in another moment gave him the shivers—shivers of repulsion, not of fear. He reached forth, grasped a strand of that object, and gently tried to raise it up. But it stuck, fastened in some way to the briars.

Undoubtedly it was a scalp. In spite of himself Ree shuddered.

"I begin to see and understand," he said to himself. "Killdeer carried the scalps of those he had slain round his waist. They were a

ghastly lot. I saw that when I took him on my shoulder to fetch him to the bed in our cabin. He has lain down here, perhaps he went to sleep. When he got up the briars caught in this one and tore it loose.

"It's a wonder he didn't see or feel the pull. Perhaps he was in a hurry. Who knows what happened? But this thing, horrid as it is, shows me that I am on Killdeer's trail."

Inspired by a sudden thought, Ree resolutely picked up the human trophy which, though half dry, was still stringy with clotted blood-stains. Holding it at arm's length, the boy descended to the brook bed, dug a hole with his foot and a piece of rock, and buried the thing under the washed-out tree roots at the side of the brook.

As he raised his head again something or some one darted into view far amid the further timber, then darted out of sight again behind a big tree. Ree did not exactly see this but he sensed it with the quick prevision which the art of woodcraft instils within the true disciple. Intuitively he dodged behind the big tree and,

crouching in the shallow brook bed, he watched, listened, waited.

The distant form, now visible as that of a half naked savage, his face hideously daubed with war-paint in grotesque design, darted swiftly to another nearer tree and peered forth at the big tree trunk long and scowlingly.

"Well," reflected the boy, "I am going to find out what it is, be it man or beast. If it's going to snow more, something must be done."

He raised his head above the bank and caught a glimpse of the darting form that was now making toward a third sheltering tree. Instantly, gun in hand, Ree rose up, took a swift sight at the flying figure, but hesitated to pull the trigger.

That hesitation nearly cost the lad dear. While his rifle still pointed, the savage darted behind another tree, and Ree lowered his weapon, preparing to continue a further evasive movement, while trying to find out just whether friend or foe now confronted him. The answer came sharp and emphatic.

"Cr-rac-ck!" The unknown had sighted hastily around the further side of the last tree shelter he had attained. The bullet sped so close to Ree's head that it clipped a lock of his dark hair from the forelock peeping from under his cap, slightly scarifying the skin beneath.

This solved his riddle all at once. Killdeer, and no one else, would have taken such a chance.

The lone Indian was reloading, his fore arm at times projecting beyond the sheltering tree trunk. Exasperated in spirit, smarting from the scratch made by the bullet, Ree took a snap-shot at the fleeting arm as a glimpse was again afforded him. He had the satisfaction of seeing the arm vanish, but in another moment he saw the savage, who had hastily reloaded, come flying back towards the big trunk where Ree had found the scalp.

Ree scrambled from the brook bed.

Hardly had he reached and was throwing himself behind a big rock on the bank of the stream, when Killdeer fired again. The ball smashed itself against the rock, and on the instant Ree,

pistol in hand, sprang up and started at full speed for the savage. The latter, seeing the pistol, rushed forward, at the same time waving his tomahawk wildly.

Killdeer was angry. Not only was he being followed, but the white foe, not content with injury to the redman, was interfering with Killdeer's search for the scalp he had lost and already missed. Therefore he was, so to speak, boiling with rage. As the two approached each other, the light snow driving gently down between, Killdeer for the first time noted that it was really a pistol that was being pointed at his head.

He stopped, his legs becoming rigid at once as he swung his hatchet and with unerring aim sent it directly at the white boy's head. But right there he had an exhibition of what coolness, quickness and nerve can do. Ree, measuring the distance, remembering also what a tough time he had once had when engaged with Killdeer at close quarters, watched the weapon cleaving the air, calculated coolly just where it

would strike if permitted, then just before the instant of contact, he moved his head aside, not too much or too little. The hatchet flew by over Ree's shoulder and was shattered against the same rock that had sheltered the boy from Killdeer's rifle bullet.

Standing, with an empty rifle, the savage glared at his adversary a second, then leaped aside like a flash. A protruding clump of bushes received him, closed over him and immediately he was out of sight.

Why did not Kingdom shoot? He hardly knew himself, unless that he had never lost his natural antipathy to killing anyone, even momentarily helpless.

But now—something must be done, and at once. Movement among the bushes evinced that Killdeer was struggling up the brooklet's bank to harbor and reload on the other side of the clump. Ree must do likewise. When Killdeer's head emerged above the bushes Ree was ready, his pistol again in his belt, his rifle loaded and primed.

Warily the savage looked over where his young adversary stood. Then he disappeared again, doubtless reloading the while.

Striding further back Ree took his stand at a big beech near the dry brook side, but could see nothing of Killdeer, for the fringes of undergrowth all along that side kept the Indian out of sight. For quite a while Ree stood, watching, listening, but saw nothing more, unless a slight shaking of the tops of the bushes might indicate a movement lower down.

"I do believe he is hunting for that missing scalp," thought Ree. "Well, he won't find it where he put it down. I bet that's what he is here after."

Another pause: then up jumped the savage as if angry at something or somebody. He was fairly shaking with suppressed passion.

Under a sudden impulse Ree stood out boldly, knowing that Killdeer understood the white man's language, though he was not apt at making himself understood except in his own tongue.

"Hey—you!" he shouted. "You won't find

what you're huntin' for, Killdeer. It isn't there any more."

Apparently the savage had to think for a minute. All at once comprehension seemed to come to him in a flash, and he whirled, his painted face convulsed with wrath as he shook his arm at the lad on the opposite bank. Then leaping forward he plunged down through the bushes to the half dry brook bed, passing over the very spot selected by Ree for burying that tainted fragment of human hair and flesh.

"It went through him in a jiffy," thought Ree. "The fool thinks I've got it, I do believe!"

But further inactivity was cut short by the sudden conviction that he must run or fight. He did not retreat to the tree, but stood, rifle in hand, waiting for the angry savage, who now came recklessly charging across the dry bed of the little creek.

It was strange, almost unbelievable, knowing the primal habits of the redman to hide when pursued and to attack as a rule only when he can

surprise the foe, to see this one half-naked savage come hurtling across in the face of almost certain death should Ree take it into his head to aim and fire.

But to one of Killdeer's habits and ways, the loss of one cherished scalp was the same as it would have been to Ree to lose his comrade John, or anyone else both dear and good to him. With these scalps as trophies—mute witnesses to the faithfulness with which Killdeer had lived up to the vows of revenge he had long ago made in behalf of his father Great Thunder, he could meet his father in the other land, showing him, through them, what he had done on earth to avenge his death.

Finally, when the Indian had approached as near as Ree thought advisable, he raised his loaded rifle, at the same time calling out: "Halt! Halt, or I'll fire!"

Without halting, however, Killdeer raised his own gun like a flash. But quickly as he did so, there came another rifle crack from across the stream.

CHAPTER IV

AGAIN—THE MYSTERY OF THE CANOE

Not less surprised than the savage, Ree, in the act of firing, saw the scalp-lock on Killdeer's head that rose up pugnaciously, swept back as if a sudden puff of wind had struck it. More than that, while the Indian, instead of firing, threw his head back, at the same instant a part of the tufted lock, severed mysteriously from the roots, fell over his forehead as he made ready to get a sight on his visible foe.

"Hi-ya! Whoo-o-ugh-h-h!" broke from the savage in a yell of rage and pain, as a trickle of blood along the shaved head indicated where the unknown bullet, in nipping off a part of the scalp-lock, had slightly grazed the skin over

the skull. Instead of firing, Killdeer leaped up, brandishing his gun above his head as he tumultuously dashed forward with a recklessness most unusual.

Now was Ree's chance, for he was almost a dead shot on the spur of the moment. Without turning to see who had sent the unseen bullet, Ree quickly shifted his aim to the Indian's waving arms. Crack! As the smoke rose from his rifle muzzle, the boy saw the Indian's gun waver, then drop from his now nerveless grasp.

There was no time to reload. Ree drew his knife and, half crouching, waited his enemy, at the same time casting his own rifle behind him on the dry brook bed. Still Killdeer came on, not more than twenty yards separating the two from actual contact. The savage was already drawing his knife from his belt, when Ree heard a shuffling sound from behind.

He did not turn, feeling vaguely assured that the unseen ball aimed at Killdeer must be from a friend. Already he was preparing to dash

forward to meet this strange, eager foe, when suddenly Killdeer, with one scowling look at his opponent, wheeled, snatched up his rifle and with a single leap darted into the thick fringe of bushes lining the brook bank. At the same time something brushed his sleeve and a familiar voice was at his ear.

"Got here just in time, didn't I, Ree?"

Without turning his head, Ree grasped the extended hand of John.

"You sure did, John!" he acceded. "We would have had a fine fight for it if you hadn't nipped him in the scalp-lock."

"Where you going, Ree?" for the older boy was already on the Indian's trail, pushing through the fringe of bushes.

"He's making a sneak to gain time. Your gun loaded?"

"Yep—and yours?"

"Not yet, but I've got my pistol. Follow me close! We got to see either his back in the open woods somewhere or fight it out the best we can. I don't want to kill him, John, but if

we don't put him on the run, he'll watch round and try to kill one or both of us."

Pushing through the bushes, side by side now, the pair peered forth into the more open woods beyond. There came a flutter of something moving forty to fifty yards away amid the shadows of the big overhanging trees. Then came the flash and crackle of a rifle and another bullet spat against the thick undergrowth, close to John's shoulder.

Both lads instinctively dropped to their knees. Separating somewhat, they peered forth again. From behind a large pine within fair gunshot they saw the brownish flash of an arm wielding a ramrod. Killdeer with marvelous rapidity was ramming home another bullet. Ree, already on one knee, levelled his now reloaded rifle and took swift aim, just as what looked like a brown, naked elbow appeared for an instant.

A yell followed this. The next moment the figure of the lone Indian became visible as he ran in a zigzag course towards the north through the

woods. One arm—the left one—hung down as if it might have been injured.

"I must say, Ree, you are a good shot, once you get a fair sight at what you want to hit. I ought to have hit that fellow square between the eyes when he was running towards you. But somehow I only got part of his scalp-lock."

"Getting that lock of his hair evidently made him angrier than if you had plugged him anywhere else."

Then while John produced some cold corn bread and bacon, which Ree eagerly ate, both lads kept a sharp lookout while talking lest Killdeer, his vengeance still unslaked, should attempt a detour and steal upon them unawares.

Mr. Hatch, it appeared, had not yet left his bed, though he had wakened sufficiently to hear what John had to tell. When the boy reiterated his resolve to go back across the river for Ree, the old man faintly objected, advising John to wait until morning. It was evident that Hatch was rather afraid of being left alone at night.

John acknowledged that it was risky, but he

assured the Quaker that when they both came back before bedtime the cabin would be well taken care of.

"Well, as it is getting on towards night we might as well return to the river, and unless something turns up that we don't know about now, one of us might as well go over and see how the old Quaker is coming on," said Ree.

"Only one of us?" queried John in an exclamatory tone. "Why not both of us?"

"It's this way, John. That devil off there," pointing in the direction in which Killdeer had gone, "might come back. It would be safer to meet him over here than about our cabin. Wouldn't Mr. Hatch remain comfortable if he was left one night alone?"

"He's mighty nervous, almost unstrung. I doubt if he would have the nerve to go out and feed the horses after dark."

"Here is the way I feel, John. Until we get that red devil away from here, or in some subjection—say to Captain Pipe, we are not safe in our own house, our home that we have built

after buying it fairly and squarely from the Delaware chief. I want to settle with him, once for all. If we cannot drive him clear off, we are liable to be shot at any time—when we are at work, not looking out, or when we are in our beds at night."

"You think so?" John looked rather dismayed. "You really think so?"

"I *know* so, John. That red devil thinks of but one thing: he dreams of but one definite thing. That is to add one more scalp to his belt. That one added, he wants another; wants it worse than he did the rest, for his appetite grows by what it feeds upon.

"Why, you should have seen him when he found that the scalp he lost when resting under that tree was not there after all. He was furious. And when I told him that it was gone, he laid its loss to me and would have given almost anything to have taken mine in its place. Ten to one, he is sneaking back here now, right at this moment."

The sun was getting low: the snow had ceased. John was reflecting. After they had rested and Ree had eaten to repletion, the two were now on the way back to where John had left the canoe. They had dallied along for some time, so that by the time they reached the landing probably two hours or more had elapsed. The sun, very low in the west, just then peered from behind a cloud which was a remnant of those from which the light snow had fallen.

"Sure you know where you left that canoe, John?"

"Somewhere close about here. The bushes make it hard to find anywhere, worse luck!" He was probing here and there through the fringe of undergrowth lining the river. "This looks like where I broke off a limb, so I would know the spot again."

Daylight was drooping when another flash from the sinking sun showed a broken willow limb. John sprang forward; but in the act of crying out that he had found it, he paused over

a newly discovered track in the soft mud. Down low he crouched, staring, then turned and beckoned to Ree.

"Take a good look," said the boy. "Are my eyes deceiving me, or—or isn't that the patched moccasin track again?"

Ree, stooping down, inspected the footprint. It was hardly large enough for a man, yet full-sized for a boy. Rising, he owned: "Looks like the very track, John! What in sin could that lad be doing over here? How did he get here?"

Reluctant as both were to acknowledge it, there was no use denying that the same footprints they had so carefully noted on the other side were now here right under their eyes. John looked perplexed. Ree, pushing through the bushes to the water side, saw more of the same footprints. What did it mean? By this time John joined him, but his face expressed even more wonder than his comrade's.

"Why—why," he stammered, looking up and

down the still full river. "Where is it? I left it here not three hours ago!"

"What—are you sure?" said Ree.

"Course I'm sure! Look at this branch I broke, which makes me certain I left the boat here, and that, too, aside from these foot-tracks. See, there's the mark of the keel, where I pushed and pulled it up: here's the other mark where that little rascal Flying Fish must have pushed it back into the river."

"But how did Flying Fish get over on this side?" This from Ree. "Both he and Little Wolf are friendly with Killdeer. It must have been one of them that crossed the river and put Killdeer on this side. What can he or they be doing over here to-day? And how did he or they get across, after you had already taken the canoe over here to meet me?"

CHAPTER V

FLYING FISH AGAIN. BUT WHERE IS LITTLE WOLF?

To these queries Ree's comrade had no reply other than those of pure conjecture; and conjecture was also equally at the bottom of Ree's inquiries. Taken altogether, it was a puzzling situation. Meantime night was coming on and both boys were equally anxious to get over the river and see how the Quaker was doing and also to see to the horses.

Far towards the setting sun they could see the roof and part of the cabin walls. But there was no sign of life about. Probably the horses were in the stable. No smoke was issuing from the chimney, so it was a question with both as to whether Mr. Hatch was still in bed or had

gone somewhere else. They were still looking and wondering and Ree was seriously thinking of their swimming to an island not far below, with the chance of trying to wade the west channel of the river which was more shallow than the current on the east. All at once John, restlessly probing around the near-by point which, bush covered, thrust itself further out into the stream than usual along that mostly even shore, burst into view excitedly waving an arm at Ree.

"Come on here!" he called. "Here's the canoe and—and someone else, too."

"What do you mean?" queried the other, priming his rifle as he ran.

"Mean just what I say! Never mind your gun. We won't need that."

John had put down his own weapon, evidently sure that guns were not needed just then at any rate. As Ree came up John pushed him through a fringe of undergrowth that jutted out as thickly at the apex of the point as it had spread over the broader surface behind. Emerging on the other side Ree faced a small,

shallow cove with a fringe of sandy beach. Up this was drawn the canoe, its bow being tautly fastened to a projecting limb extending from a larger sapling near.

And apparently that was all. But only apparently. Ree stared at the craft that lay broadside to them, with the low bush fringe curving sweepingly about the bow. Motioning Ree to remain silent, he drew his comrade up to the side of the craft. Nothing inside but a couple of paddles; but Ree caught a glimpse of a human foot incased in a patched moccasin that had been thrust forth carelessly beyond the swelling side of the canoe. At sight of this Ree declined longer silence. Darting forward, he leaned across the canoe and demanded of the form below:

"Hey there, Flying Fish, what you doing here? How did you get over on this side? What you doing with our boat—hey?"

At Ree's first short, sharp words, Flying Fish sat up, rubbing his eyes; then, looking at the boys, he smiled the sly, knowing smile which

among the Indians conveys much or little, as the smiler chooses.

"Wait here for Little Wolf. River, we swim. Canoe—here—all right."

Ree turned to John with an expressive gesture, meaning that there was something here to be probed that the other would not reveal unless he took the notion to, which at present seemed unlikely.

The Indian boy meantime got up, drew across his otherwise bare shoulders a sort of cape of doeskin, and looked at the two white lads quietly.

"Look here, Flying Fish," said John at length. "This is twice—two times," holding up two fingers, "that you and Little Wolf have used our boat. We saw your tracks the first time over below the cabin yonder. You took our canoe, carried someone over—and came back."

"How you know I carried over anyone?"

"Well, we went over ourselves after that. We found where you had landed. Then I went

back. My white brother here went on and found a trail—the trail of one we all know—Killdeer's."

"How you know Killdeer make trail over here?" Flying Fish looked suspicious, doubtful, yet still smiled the while.

"Well, my friend here saw him, fought with him. They exchanged shots until I, coming back across the river again, came up and then Killdeer finally took to his heels. He went north."

"Did Killdeer go—north?" This query escaped the Indian boy before he seemed to remember his rôle, that of skeptical denial.

"He did, for a fact! Then my white brother and I came back to where I had left our canoe—ours through the gift of Chief Hopocon—and we found it gone. But there and in the woods near here we found that moccasin track."

Here John pointed directly at the patched moccasin which Flying Fish still wore. The boy drew back his foot, uneasily it seemed.

"But the canoe was again gone," interposed

Ree. "But there were your tracks, plain as could be! Then presently John here found the canoe around this point, with you asleep under it. Is not that so?"

Flying Fish looked from one to the other a moment and seemed to debate within himself. Finally he broke into a guttural laugh, and slung his inseparable bow and quiver of arrows over one shoulder as he replied:

"Paleface brothers veree sharp. Find out everything. Ugh! But me not harm canoe—no, no!"

Having said this much, Flying Fish turned as if to go; but Ree laid a hand gently on his shoulder, saying:

"Do not leave us this way, brother! We are friends, are we not?"

"You no want Flying Fish to use canoe?"

"You know that we will gladly lend you our canoe and also anything else we can spare, won't we, John?"

John nodded, seeing that Ree was after further and deeper information.

"How did you happen to swim the river this morning, Flying Fish?" began Ree again, speaking very gently and smiling accordingly. "Had you forgotten something you failed to remember yesterday?"

"Me no forget—anything. But—boat gone —so must swim river."

"But why, Flying Fish? You know you might need our canoe again—perhaps soon. If you want to know why we were on this side, it is that Killdeer tried to kill our friend—the man of peace, Hatch. He also threatened to kill us and burn our cabin. Therefore I thought it best to follow him, for we thought that he alone had taken our canoe. We did not dream that you or Little Wolf were anywhere about."

"I see you friend to Flying Fish, to Little Wolf, too. Is it so?"

"Yes, yes; it is so!" Ree spoke heartily for he really liked these Delaware lads who hitherto had always seemed to like the Paleface boys. "We have always liked you two, haven't we, John?"

"Of course we have!" replied John, feeling that it was his duty to support Ree's plan, whatever that was, in drawing the real truth out of this stolid Indian boy. "We have always tried to be good to them, haven't we?"

"Right you are in that, John!" Ree, turning to Flying Fish, continued: "We like you both; yes, we white boys do—ever so much."

"We also like Paleface boys—yes. Flying Fish tell all—all." The boy smiled at his white friends, then went on. "Killdeer, he leave your wigwam—no house. We, Little Wolf and Flying Fish, out for fire hunt. We get deer. We go too far from Delaware village. Must wait 'til morning. We start fire, skin deer, and have big eat—venison. We still there when up come Killdeer. He look seeck—veree seeck."

"He had good reason to look sick," commented John. "We had taken him in; we had given him food, had bound up his wounds, and tried to show him we would be friendly."

The Delaware boy showed deep amazement.

He slowly shook his head, muttering as if half to himself:

"Little Wolf no think so. Flying Fish no think so. Killdeer, when we ask him—eat, shake his head. He say white boys and that Hatch, they drive him out in the night; him hoongry, weak, with hurt where Paleface boy shoot. He show us place. We sorry for him. Ugh! He was in bad feex."

"Why—look here, boys!" exclaimed John, while Ree shook his head at Flying Fish, an aggravating smile on his face. "Only that day, while Ree here was trying to find out what had become of Mr. Hatch, taking the Quaker's horse to show the way, Killdeer fired on him, just missing him by his falling down in the snow. Well, what could Ree do after that but jump up and take a crack at Killdeer?

"Then Ree went on and found Mr. Hatch in a trap. He got him out of that, and on the way back Ree gathered up Killdeer, took him into the cabin and fed and doctored him. That night and the next Killdeer was in our cabin,

we doing what we could for him. You and Little Wolf were there and you know this is so. Next day you and I went with Mr. Hatch to your village, where you two stayed on. Mr. Hatch and I went back.

"That night Killdeer somehow saw that Mr. Hatch had lost his scalp. He found out that one scalp among those at his belt was worthless because its owner was still alive and in our cabin.

"Killdeer managed to loosen his bonds during the night. He tried to kill the Quaker, but, missing him, split the table on which Hatch was leaning. Ree and I, taken by surprise, saw him leap through the door and vanish. Ree fired one shot, but the lone Indian was gone.

"From there he must have found your camp and told you what he did. Now the question is, do you believe him or do you believe us? You saw how we treated him before you left, although he gave us little but scowls and Indian curses. But we kept up our friendly

treatment until he left us as we have just told. He has sworn to kill us and also the Quaker. But that is no reason that you and Little Wolf should feel other than friendly with us."

Apparently all this completely removed any doubts which Flying Fish might have had as to the friendly feelings of both the boys and the Quaker. Killdeer, on the contrary, had abused both the laws of friendship and hospitality. Once more Flying Fish expressed himself as satisfied and proceeded to explain to John and Ree what they had been persuaded to do for Killdeer. As may be imagined, both white lads gave close attention. First Flying Fish, rising, shook hands with them, saying:

"Me believe. Little Wolf and Flying Fish always treat Killdeer as friend. But now—" He shook his young head doubtfully. "I—know not. Mebbe Killdeer no so friendly after all."

He paused and seemed to be thinking. Ree, reminding him, said:

"What did Killdeer get you to do for him?

That night he came to your camp in the woods, did he get you to take our canoe and put him across?"

Flying Fish nodded, then:

"Killdeer, he say he must go north. He not well. He have friends among his kind along Big Lake," meaning Lake Erie. "He must go. Will we take Paleface canoe and put him over river? We did. Then he say for us to go back, see where Killdeer have powder, lead, in cave," pointing vaguely in the direction of where certain caverns were known to be, not far from the cabin where the boys lived. "Little Wolf and Flying Fish no want go. But we friends with Killdeer. He talk hard. Then we say yes. We go back with canoe. Little Wolf know cave best. He go; I stay in bush—wait—sleep. Flying Fish take powder, lead Little Wolf get, but boat gone. Tie powder, lead on log. Then swim, push log across river—"

"Gee! You must have had a hard time!" This from John.

But Flying Fish merely smiled, intimating

that as it was to serve a friend they did not consider it too great a task.

Without following Flying Fish literally, it may be said that while Flying Fish remained near the river, Little Wolf had gone north to a certain rendezvous previously agreed upon, to deliver the ammunition to Killdeer. Flying Fish was now awaiting his return. After crossing and finding the canoe, they had turned the log loose. Again borrowing the canoe, they went on downstream a few miles to where they were nearest the place of appointment where Killdeer would meet them. If Killdeer was not there and the boys did not wish to wait, they were to hide the ammunition in a hollow log that Killdeer indicated accurately. After landing Little Wolf, Flying Fish took the canoe back, lest the white boys should find it missing, which they did, as has been seen. But in the meantime Flying Fish had returned and, being tired, he tied the canoe where John found it, lay down and quickly went to sleep.

"Why didn't you put it back where you first took it?" queried Ree idly.

"Flying Fish tired. Know this—good place. Know you find it—all same."

"That is all right," put in John. "But when may we look for Little Wolf?"

"He come soon. You in nurry? No wait. We swim river back again."

"No, no! We will wait awhile, anyhow." This by Ree.

And yet both the white lads were growing more anxious about the state of things over at the cabin. No sign of life had so far been observed from this side. While it was unlikely that anyone would disturb things there, the boys were anxious about Mr. Hatch, who certainly was not well.

The sun having set, a slow twilight deepened, with a still clearing sky. Then all at once came the half mournful cry of the whippoorwill near by. It was repeated with a long drawn out cadence that at once attracted Flying Fish's attention. He sat erect, and listened for the next call.

CHAPTER VI

KILLDEER AGAIN

All at once Flying Fish placed his hands to his mouth and in a slightly different key imitated the night bird's note.

"Whip-poor-will!" The answering cry rang slowly forth, and was answered at once from the distance in the woods.

"That Little Wolf!" he excitedly exclaimed, in a manner most unusual in either of these phlegmatic lads. "He—in trouble. I go."

And without another word he plunged into the undergrowth bordering the water and vanished.

"You stay here, John," said Ree. "I'm going to follow that chap. You watch the boat.

We don't know what may be going on!" And Ree too disappeared.

Pushing vigorously on, he was almost startled to hear another whippoorwill cry sounding more feebly than the first, and with a strangling gurgle at the end, as if the caller was being choked off. It was certainly much nearer, or its struggling notes would hardly have been heard.

Almost at once came the answering cry not far ahead, but in the key Flying Fish had first affected when he had answered the cry he had declared to be Little Wolf. With a sudden rush Ree flung himself ahead faster than ever.

"You—Killdeer—" came back a guttural voice, "let Little Wolf alone! He—my—brother—"

After that voices seemed to be merged in a physical struggle, though the hoarser, deeper tones of someone older were interjected. With a final stumbling leap the white lad plunged into a more open glade under the trees, where the undergrowth thinned out, and beheld three figures struggling a few yards away.

Luckily Ree had brought not only gun but pistol, and both were loaded. As he leaped behind a bit of undergrowth he could see three forms, one of them larger than the other two, engaged in a contest. One of these smaller figures was on the ground, being held by the larger one, who was repelling the third figure. What it was all about Ree did not know. The larger form was undoubtedly Killdeer who, for some reason, must have returned from the north towards which compass point he had been making when last seen by Ree. Probably the savage had been seeking another cover while he waited for the return of Little Wolf. Yet could it be Little Wolf he had pinned to the earth? And if so, why? Even Flying Fish did not know, or why should he have been so anxious to hurry to the aid of Little Wolf? Perhaps simply because that, realizing Little Wolf's peril, he was bound to hasten to his aid, for they were undoubtedly like brothers, in affection at least.

With another bound Ree leaped from behind

his bush into the open. Killdeer sprang up, throwing off both boys with apparent ease, though Little Wolf clung to the warrior's legs. Quick as a flash Killdeer raised his arm and Ree saw that it held a knife. Without taking aim he fired. He missed the arm but struck the knife that was wrenched from his grasp by the impact of the bullet.

At once Little Wolf rose up; Flying Fish also closed in while Ree, advancing, presented his pistol.

"Might as well give in, Killdeer," said Ree, poising the pistol in direct aim at Killdeer's head. "Let those boys go! They are my friends."

"Mine—once!" gutturally announced the lone Indian. "No friends—now!"

"Come away, Flying Fish; you too, Little Wolf! Killdeer don't stay friends long with anybody unless it's Captain Pipe. He wouldn't be friends with him but that he's afraid—"

"Killdeer—no 'fraid!" half shouted the sav-

age, wrenching loose from the grasp of both the boys. "No 'fraid white boy! No 'fraid anything!"

To emphasize this boast, and having freed himself from all hostile clutch, he hurled his tomahawk directly at Kingdom, who dodged the weapon as it flew by his head. It was still light enough to see the whirling blade on the way, and Ree knew what it meant. It angered him, however, and now he darted forward, pistol in hand, trailing his empty rifle in the other.

Seeing this, Killdeer again threw off the two Indian boys and retreated to the nearest tree. Here he stood watching while Ree paused as the boys ran up to him, exclaiming gutturally, Little Wolf pointing at a bag of something on the ground.

"All lead," said Little Wolf. "No powder there. It made Killdeer—ugh! We fought. I run. Then I make noise like whippoorwill. Flying Feesh—he answer. Killdeer—he come up behind. We fight again—"

"I know, Little Wolf. Here, load this pis-

tol!" Ree tossed him another pistol. At the same time, having recharged his rifle, he turned over powder horn and bullet pouch to the boys. "Look, he's reloading! No time to hesitate!"

And Ree, having hastily reloaded, started off again. He had seen Killdeer's arms working as they projected from behind the tree, and knew that the wily savage was also reloading.

Ree charged and primed his gun while running, and when the lone Indian saw him coming on again he worked frantically. As his hands went to his pouch, he made a sudden discovery. His last grain of powder was in the barrel, with a wadding driven hard upon it. But there was not a single bullet left.

For a moment he looked wildly about, his eyes blazing in the dusk, then clenching his fist he shook it at Ree, broke into a savage war-whoop and departed, not towards the north, but the south, zigzagging from tree to tree. Ree, seeing that Killdeer evidently had enough, for the present at least, raised his now reloaded

rifle and let the savage have a farewell shot. This broke the bark of the tree behind which the savage had jumped.

With another yell, fierce hate concentrating in every echo, the wily savage dodged from tree to tree until he was seen no more. It was too dark now to think of pursuit. After all, why should they pursue Killdeer? Still it was a disturbing thought that he had taken this direction. It might be only a ruse, however. It was hard at any time to tell just what Killdeer would do.

Both boys stood indecisively looking at Kingdom, who shook his head.

"We might as well go back to the river," he volunteered. "John will be waiting, I reckon."

"What was it he was mad about, anyway, Little Wolf?" queried Ree as the three were making their way back towards the river. From the boy's disjointed reply it appeared that when he found the cave where the ammunition was hidden Little Wolf could find no powder. Perhaps someone had stolen it; perhaps it was

never there. At any rate, when Little Wolf finally met the lone Indian with only a supply of lead, that grim savage had turned in wrath upon the boy, and things grew very threatening. Aside from bow and arrows neither of the lads had firearms or ammunition. Killdeer, proceeding to violence, after scolding the lad, the latter had sent forth his whippoorwill call. Being answered, he fought and struggled until Flying Fish arrived. What happened after that they all knew.

By this time the stars were out, and soon the moon would rise. Therefore it was no trouble to find the way back to where the canoe was supposed to be. What was the surprise of all to find that the canoe and John had vanished! It had evidently been untied and pushed back into the water.

"Well, isn't this a pretty how-d'ye-do!" exclaimed the white lad. "Where in the name of things can John have gone?"

"Mebbe white boy go back home—over there." Flying Fish was pointing across the

river in the direction of the cabin; but all looked quiet and undisturbed in that direction, so far as the present darkness would reveal to those on the east side.

"Here, Little Wolf, take this." And Ree tossed the small bundle of lead which he had picked up after Killdeer disappeared to one of the boys.

"What you take this for?" asked Little Wolf, meaning the lead.

"Why, Killdeer left it. He is now our enemy, and perhaps the same to you two. No use to leave good lead where others mignt pick it up."

"Killdeer no our enemy," remarked Flying Fish. "He try to kill you, perhaps. But he no enemy to Delaware—no."

The boy might be right. At any rate Killdeer was the enemy of all the palefaces, including now the Quaker and the two white boys. If they had doubted it before, his recent actions had effectually undeceived them. Yes, Killdeer certainly would not hesitate, should opportunity

offer, to kill or otherwise destroy the three of them. Ree, turning to the river, put his hands to his mouth and made the shrill peculiar whistle which had often been used as a signal between the two comrades. It rang not loudly but clearly over the dark, full surface of the Cuyahoga.

He repeated it after a pause of about a minute; then at once came a similar answering call from somewhere out in midstream. Also they heard the sound of a paddle blade as if someone were making hard strokes against the turbid current. Ree gave an exultant yell, not very loud, yet distinctly one of relief. He turned to the young Delawares.

"That is John. I know. But why did he leave us in this way?"

Non-committal grunts were the only replies. The Indian lads were also perplexed, for that kind of grunt usually signifies indecision of mind on the part of a redman.

The paddle strokes continued, but were evidently from further downstream.

"Ree—oh, Ree!" came John's distant voice. "Hear me?"

"Yes, yes! What is the matter?"

"Current's too swift here. Follow along the bank. I'll make it directly."

"It does need two paddles to face this current," remarked Ree as the three, after whooping in reply, pushed through the bushes while they followed the bank, at times calling out to let John know where they were. Presently they saw the dim outline of the canoe, with John working hard at the paddling.

Now being out of the swiftest current, the boy was making directly inshore, and presently pushing the bow of his canoe upon the strip of river beach. The others came up, while Ree, impatient to hear, cried out:

"What made you leave where we left you, John?"

"I first heard the sound of firearms coming from the direction you had taken. I didn't know but that you might be in some sort of trouble. So I untied the canoe, threw in the

rest of our things, and waited. Presently I heard another shot from your direction. It seemed certain then that you were having trouble with someone. It might be Killdeer—"

"It *was* Killdeer. We finally drove him off, didn't we, boys?"

Both the young Delawares nodded their heads at once.

"Well," put in John again, "I didn't know what to think. So I concluded the best plan would be to have everything ready, so if you did come in a hurry and time was short, we could strike out across the river without any delay on my part. Wasn't that right, Ree?"

"Of course! But what was the reason that when we did come neither you or the canoe were in sight at all?"

"That was partly accidental. It seems the current is stiffer now than it was two hours ago. Must have rained or snowed heavier up above. However, when that second shot came, I heard a yell. It—"

"Killdeer made that," remarked Ree. "He

was real mad because the boys did not bring him powder, but only lead. He may have gone back for that powder, boys. Who knows?"

"What? Was there no powder in that cave?"

Little Wolf shook his head negatively, then added:

"Lead there where Killdeer said. But no powder where he said. Me look. Tracks in that cave. Someone been there. Might find powder; no find lead."

"How was that?" asked John.

"Lead in one corner, powder in nudder hole, behind rock. Someone get powder. Tracks there—me see 'em."

"It might be that this was lucky for us," remarked Ree. "If Killdeer had got the powder as well as the lead he would be dangerous."

"Do you know what I think?" said John, leaning close. "Old Duff is still round about in these woods somewhere. More than likely it was him. He has a hiding-place in that cave section."

The other lads got into the canoe. Ree took up the remaining paddle and they struck out to cross the river. The current ran fiercer than ever. It was all the two boys could do to make their craft stem the current as they got out into its full force. At last, giving this up, they paddled and steered across towards the islets lining this portion of the west shore where, as the force of the stream moderated, they were at last able to paddle against it more successfully.

"When I left the cove on the other side," resumed John, "I merely intended to wait for you just offshore, yet near enough to be on hand instantly if needed, when you came. But when I got to the point jutting out, that makes the small bight, the full current struck me. Before I realized it I was out in the river with the current rushing me on.

"After that I paddled—might and main—to regain that bight, but was in the act of giving up when I heard your whistle. Bet your life I

was glad to answer! I don't think I ever knew that current was so strong."

But Little Wolf and Flying Fish, who had indeed lived near there all their lives, declared that in midwinter it was often that way. But even they felt that John had done the best he could.

As they neared the boys' place the deep shadows enveloped them until, after leaving the canoe pulled out, they mounted the bluff on the lower side. There the rising moon sent a pale light over the scene, revealing the outline of their home more plainly. They were at the edge of the clearing.

Suddenly two forms glided out of the thick timber. Little Wolf saw them first, as a feather waved from the scalp-lock of one.

"Ugh!" he ejaculated. "My people come! Look, Flying Fish!"

Both Ree and John, equally anxious as to the state of things in and about their home, had not seen these intruders. Only the exclamation by Little Wolf made them whirl around

with raised weapons. Then friendly gutturals sounded as the two Delawares came forward, saying "How! How! We come for our pappoose. Stay away—long—too long!"

Then they shook hands gravely, at the same time motioning their own lads to get behind them. Briefly the youngsters told of all that had happened, which was confirmed by the white boys, who finally urged them all to come with them to the cabin, remain all night and so on. But the elderly warriors shook their heads.

"We go home—time we go to our village." And the four without further parley started off, the two delinquent boys demurely following their elders.

For a moment more Ree and John surveyed the clearing and the roof of the cabin, now lighted by the moon.

"I guess everything is all right. Suppose we look into the stable first."

"Very well," replied Ree. "It would be better now to see to things outside."

The horses were in the stable, but their empty

manger and restless movements indicated lack of feed. Without further delay they gave the hungry beasts an ample supply of the wild hay and other forage which they always tried to keep in storage at this time of the year.

After that they went round to the door of the cabin, pushing it open, while the flare of a candle, which they had lighted in their only lantern, cast a dubious light through the room. Aside from some cold victuals which they had left there for the Quaker, and which showed that he must have eaten, there was nothing inside to indicate but what things were quiet and undisturbed. A heavy breathing, audible as they entered, now suddenly ceased. Then came a familiar though shaky voice.

"Who is it? Oh—it's the boys, is it?" The Quaker's lean figure was now sitting up in bed. "Glad am I that I am still alive. Where have you been?"

They briefly told him. The old man looked sad and depressed.

CHAPTER VII

THE MIDNIGHT BATTLE

As the three friends sat around the cheerful fire, later in the evening, the Quaker from his seat directly before the blaze spoke after a long silence, saying:

"Young friends, in the Scriptures it says, 'Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbor's house, lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.' Verily, I have sinned, and 'treasures of wickedness profit nothing; but righteousness delivereth from death.' I shall not be long with thee and when I am gone, bury my bones in some quiet place here in these forest wilds. I have seen only suffering and death follow upon my transgressions, and my repentance must be in giving my remaining days to the good of these poor savages. Search no more for the poor, unfortunate Duff nor seek to obtain

the writing he has, which, with that in my possession, tells where earthly treasure is hidden near Philadelphia. It is better far that the buried fortune be never found. It has caused only woe—only sorrow. But when I am gone, dear young friends, my mare shall be your own and all that is mine you shall divide equally. In my saddle bags wilt thou find papers and other articles. Think not too hardly of me, as I lie cold in death. None may ever know my temptations."

With a weary sigh, his face still ashy pale, and shaking his trembling hand to stop their words, as both boys began speaking, hoping to dispel his melancholy thoughts, the Quaker immediately retired, leaving Ree and John considerably mystified.

Early the following morning Kingdom went to turn the horses out that they might browse on the tender branches and eat of the withered grass about the clearing now within their reach as the snow was gone; and, having done so, he stood on the bluff beside the cabin, watching the

swirling, rapid river. Then it was that he made a discovery. The canoe, which had been drawn up on the shore where the bank was not steep, at the north of the water-swept ridge the cabin occupied, was gone.

Could it have floated away? No—Killdeer had taken it. The manner of the craft's disappearance he could not doubt from the moment the thought came to him. The rain had washed away any tracks the Indian might have left, but Ree was sure he was right. Killdeer had heard them talking of the canoe, and had used it in getting away.

John, also, felt that such was surely the case when Ree called to him making known his discovery.

"The heathen!" he exclaimed. "When he is done with it, he will leave it in the water, and like as not it is in Lake Erie by this time. I'm sorry, because we can't get another until Captain Pipe comes home, and I did so want to make a trip clear to the lake, some time!"

"We will make a search for the canoe when

the water goes down a little, any way," Ree answered hopefully; and then he suggested that they spend the day at fence building and clearing land, of which work they had accomplished much less than they had planned to do, because of the deep snow and other interruptions.

Indeed, thus far the boys had been far from realizing their hopes. While they had a considerable number of deer skins and other furs of value, of their own procuring, they had done scarcely any trading with the Indians, for want of some one to trade with, and the winter had been much less profitable than the preceding one.

A hard day's work while the Quaker looked on, very quiet and melancholy, was followed by a hearty supper and early going to bed. In a similar way the next day was spent, but toward evening the lads shouldered their guns and walked down the river a considerable distance, hoping they might find their canoe or get a shot at a deer, perhaps. The wild turkeys would be industriously feeding, too, now that the snow

was gone, and they were anxious to obtain one or more for their larder.

A mile from the cabin a small stream emptied into the river, and as they reached it, much such a discovery as was made by Robinson Crusoe of old, was made by John. There in the soft earth left by the receding water was the imprint of a moccasined foot.

A low whistle came from the boy's lips as he pointed his finger to show Ree the cause of his surprise.

"And here are more!" exclaimed Kingdom, in a low voice. "I should judge that a dozen Indians had crossed here. Who could it have been?"

Ordinarily John would have been no more frightened than Ree, but the disappearing daylight, the exceeding quiet, save for the murmuring waters, and the loneliness of the spot in which the tracks were found, served to affect him deeply, and a growing dread and a fear he could not express came over him.

"Let's hurry home," he said in hushed tones.

"I feel—I feel as though something were going to happen."

Ree laughed quietly, but followed close upon his friend's heels as the latter turned and walked swiftly in the direction of the cabin.

Even when their home was reached and the blazing fireplace sent its good cheer to warm and comfort him, John could not shake off the depression and apprehensiveness which had come over his thoughts, but insisted on closing the door and frequently looking stealthily out through the loop holes.

"Listen to me," Ree reasoned with him. "We have been here for months and have had no trouble except with that rascal, Killdeer. It is because the Indians have been away and we have seen scarcely any of them, that those foot-prints gave you the feeling of danger being near. Now, do be reasonable, John. Turn Ring out of doors and he will bark if any one comes near, and you sit down here and be comfortable."

"Well, I suppose you are right," was John's

answer. "But—I'd rather do this way, and as for trusting Ring, my opinion of him isn't any too high after he lay perfectly still and let Killdeer jump up, get his gun and tomahawk and pretty near kill Mr. Hatch, and then get away as he did."

"Well, you couldn't have expected the dog to do anything else when we were treating the Indian in a friendly way. You couldn't expect Ring to know more than we did!"

But John would not be persuaded. Was it some sixth sense—some more than human instinct which in that time of danger prompted the boy's vigilance? Was it Fate which, working out its own plans, gave him this feeling that he must be on his guard? Much more likely it was He who sees even the fall of a sparrow, who was watching over the lonely cabin so far from the homes of civilized men, that night, as always, and in His own mysterious way caused one of the brave boys to be on guard.

It was still early when Mr. Hatch and Kingdom went to bed. John helped cover the fire

with ashes that it might keep until morning, making the cabin totally dark, but said he would remain up awhile, peeping out now and then, just to satisfy himself that Killdeer or other Indians were not prowling near.

The truth was, he could not shake off the dread with which the footprints by the creek had filled him. He would have been infinitely less alarmed had he seen the Indians who made them, themselves, instead.

The hours dragged on toward midnight and Ree, tired of expostulating with his friend, went to sleep. The Quaker had long since been snoring. Still John sat quietly before the fireplace or stood gazing from a loop hole.

From the shadows of the woods across the clearing twelve dusky figures crept one by one. They were already well out of the forest when John, going to look out again, saw them, not all at once, but here and there one as they moved silently in different directions. Then a cloud came before the moon, and he could see nothing.

Yet he waited at his post, fearing to wake Ree until he knew there was real danger.

When the moonlight shone clearly again, he discovered that the savages were spreading out on all sides as though to surround the cabin, while two were stealthily approaching the house —no, it was the barn they wished to reach, for now they crept in a direct line toward the corner in which the barn door was.

John had seen enough. Softly he turned to Ree's bunk. He placed his hand over his friend's mouth to prevent his speaking too loudly, as he might when suddenly disturbed, then whispered to him:

"Ree, the cabin is surrounded by Indians!"

If a gun had been discharged just over his head, Ree could not have sprung up more quickly. In an instant, and without a word, he was at a loop hole.

Again, however, the moon was behind the clouds and he could see nothing. In his mind was the thought that John might have been the

victim of his own imagination, but he would not say so for the world.

"Shall I wake Mr. Hatch?" John whispered, depending on Ree for directions, as he always did.

Instead of answering Kingdom seized a pistol and through the loop hole fired.

"They are stealing the horses," he cried in a low voice. "Open the door and after them!"

John obeyed instantly, while Ree almost jumped into his clothes; but the moment the door was opened there came a crash of rifles, accompanied by horrible yells. A half dozen bullets with quick little thuds, buried themselves in the wood at John's side.

"Come back, John!"

Ree's order was heeded before it was spoken, and the door crashed shut in answer. For a few seconds all was quiet, and then a burst of flame shot up outside the cabin.

"They've fired the stable!"

In frightened, thrilling tones John yelled the words, and even as he spoke the reddish yellow

glare was seen through the crevices between the logs which separated the lean-to barn from the interior of the cabin.

"They've taken the horses and set the hay on fire!" John cried again, the next instant, and as if in derisive reply there came a chorus of war-whoops and savage yells from without, while within, Theodore Hatch, awakened by the noise, grasped his saddle bags tightly and loudly pleaded to be saved—begged that he be not left alone; and Ring's barking added to the tumult and excitement.

Already the flames were lighting up the cabin, glowing through the half-chinked wall like a red-hot furnace, and the smoke and odor of the burning hay came creeping in as though to stifle all.

"We can't stay here and be burned up! We've got to run for it! Come on! Hurry, Mr. Hatch!"

John's voice was desperate, and in another moment he would have led the way in flight to almost certain death.

"Wait!"

Stern in its calmness was the word Ree spoke. Pushing a bear skin before him, he was on the floor creeping through a hole leading into the stable,—a hole which had been sawed out that their dog might at any time go quickly from the cabin into the barn and so watch over both. Poor Ring! He was of little use now.

Thus getting into the barn with all haste, Ree sought to smother the flames with the bear skin while they still burned in the hay alone. But he was too late. The smoke blinded and nearly suffocated him. The heat burned his unprotected face and the bear skin was not large enough to envelop the fire, already burning in every part of the hay stored in a corner of the rude stable.

Never had Kingdom been so at a loss to know what to do. The horses were gone, the logs of the barn were now ablaze. The cabin must be saved, or they would be driven unprotected into the very arms of the savages.

"Hand me the axe," he called, and John, who

was at that moment half way through the opening leading to the barn, quickly retreated and secured an axe for each from their place beside the chimney.

With furious haste he sprang again to the low opening through which he must go. He passed an axe to Ree, then crawled after it, heedless of the flames which roared around him—heedless of the burns he received from the many red-hot tongues licking up the wisps of hay scattered on the stable's earthen floor.

As he rose to his feet in the choking smoke and heat, he saw Ree, almost surrounded by fire. He was attacking, with the fury of a giant in battle, the upright posts by which the logs of the lean-to were held in place against the cabin wall.

With equal zeal and energy John rained blows upon the supports at the other side, the hot coals falling about his head, the fiery tongues of flame scorching his moccasins and legs till he could have screamed out in pain.

One never knows how much he can do in a

minute's time till put to the test; and it was not more than sixty seconds, though it seemed much longer, until the side walls of the stable were knocked loose from the cabin and the light logs came tumbling down. Still the end wall farthest from the cabin stood, though 'twas burning fiercely, the hay having been against it.

Seizing a burning pole which had fallen from the roof, Ree rammed it hard against the flaming timbers. Instantly John was helping him and their united strength did the work. With a crash the wall fell outward. It dragged away from the cabin with it the logs of the side walls, and the poles and bark of the roof came tumbling about the boys' heads.

Loud yells from all directions followed as an echo the noise of the falling logs. The Indians had little thought that inside the roaring furnace the burning barn made, two boys were working like more than human beings to save themselves and home, and their shrieks showed their chagrin. Disappointed in their expectations that soon the cabin door must open or the

Palefaces be burned alive, they leaped forward in mad eagerness.

A shower of bullets sang over Ree's head. John was already half through the "cat hole," —the low opening in the cabin wall. In one more second Ree would have followed, but—as he stopped to kneel, a faintness seized him, his head grew light and darkness came before his eyes. Fainting from his tremendous exertions and partial suffocation, he fell prostrate.

Thinking Ree was safely following him, John was no sooner in the cabin than he seized his rifle and rushed to a loop hole. He did not notice Theodore Hatch standing in the doorway, the door wide open, and Ring barking at his side; and he did not think of Ree until a horrid yell, much nearer than the others, sounded close at hand and he turned to that side of the cabin. The fire still blazed, and through the wide crevices he saw by its light a savage draw his tomahawk and whirl it above his head.

Just what followed John never was quite certain. He thought he saw Ree standing as though

he knew not what to do; the Indian rushing upon him, and paused in astonishment. His rifle went off as though of its own accord and the Redskin tumbled in a heap.

The Indian's fall was the first thing that John fully realized. He had shot him down in his excitement without really knowing it; but at the instant the savage went down the plucky boy discovered Ree lying flat just outside the cabin, his buckskin clothing smoking, the Indians dashing nearer with hideous yells. He flew to the "cat hole" to draw his friend's body in. As he did so there came an awful crash behind him, and he heard the Quaker shriek and groan.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VICTORY.

The fear which weighed upon John Jerome's heart, as he hurriedly drew the unconscious form of his friend through the low opening into the cabin, regardless of the attack made upon Theodore Hatch, cannot be told in words.

It was as though the battle had been fought and lost, and if Ree were dead he cared not how quickly his own end came. Yet he did not pause nor for an instant again lose his head.

With Kingdom's senseless form safely in the cabin, he ran to the open door, and leaping over the body of the Quaker lying just inside, caught one brief glance of a scene which he never forgot as long as he lived. Ring's teeth were fas-

tened in the shoulder of a savage staggering under the attack and his sharp nails were tearing the fellow's skin to shreds, while the Redskin, vainly trying to shake the dog off, stabbed him again and again, his mighty arm moving with the rapidity of lightning.

Even as John looked the Indian and the dog went down together, and the foremost of the Redskins rushing onward, leaped over them just as the boy slammed the heavy door, the huge wooden latch clicking into place as an accompaniment to their furious cries.

Most fortunately for John and his friends the lucky shot by which he laid low the savage who would have tomahawked Ree, had served to check the charge of the other Indians for a minute or two. And they might not have closed in again so soon but for the attack one bold fellow had made on Theodore Hatch in the open doorway. It was this savage who felt Ring's fangs and was beaten down by the faithful dog, now lying dead beside him, bleeding from a score of wounds.

John knew his pistols were on the fireplace mantel and in a moment he had them. By the firelight outside he could see the Indians far better than they could see him, and he fired two shots in rapid succession. What injury he did he could not tell, but was satisfied to see the savages retreating, carrying off the body of the one who had been shot while attacking Ree, and helping away the buck so badly hurt by Ring.

That the discontinuance of the attack was only temporary John was certain. The tiny cabin offered too good a chance for victory and plunder to be passed by, especially now that one of the Indians had been killed; yet the brave boy defending his home was very thankful for the lull in the battle. Though his own burns and bruises nearly crazed him, he now hastened to the relief of Ree.

With infinite joy he found that his friend still breathed, and lifting him to a bunk he placed him upon it and sprinkled water on his face. That simple restorative was enough. Almost immediately Kingdom's eyes opened and before

he could be restrained he was sitting up, holding his dizzy head between his hands and asking John if he were hurt.

A sorry sight the boy presented. His hair and eyebrows and lashes were singed to a yellow brown, his clothes were burned black in places and his hands and face were sorely scorched and scratched. The smoke which had filled his eyes left them red and watery and only by an effort could he see at all. In a dazed, wondering way he watched John drawing the unconscious form of the Quaker toward a bunk, then suddenly remembering all that had happened, he got to his feet to help.

"You lie down," John Jerome commanded; but, although he had to set his teeth and use all his power of will to endure his pain and keep up, Ree aided in caring for Mr. Hatch.

The old gentleman's wound was only a bad gash on the shoulder, made by a tomahawk which had missed his head, and he had fainted from fright. As best they could in their haste the boys bound up the wound beside the old

man's collar bone and then Ree made the discovery that not a gun or pistol in the cabin was loaded. He could have scolded John for such forgetfulness, but remembering all that he had done, said not a word, though he at once saw to it that bullets were rammed home in every weapon.

It was only natural that Ree should take command of the forces of the tiny fortress the moment he was on his feet. While John had done nobly when left to his own resources, no sooner was his beloved friend astir than he became unable to direct affairs himself and had to depend on Kingdom to give the orders, which, however, he executed willingly.

The Indians did not at once resume the battle, nor, as the boys looked searchingly out, was a solitary one of them to be seen. The day was breaking now, raw and bleak. It was safe to believe that, if the savages did not return before it was entirely light, they would not come during the day.

The young pioneers, however, were willing to

take no chances. Too well they remembered the disastrous result of having been over-venturesome when the cabin was attacked the previous spring. So while Ree alternately looked through the loop holes and rubbed his burns with fresh bear grease, John kept one eye upon the smoldering ruins of the barn, which might even yet set the cabin ablaze, and with the other optic and his hands ministered further to the needs of Theodore Hatch.

The Quaker in course of time came to his senses and Ree, having heard from John how the old gentleman had stood in the open door while the stable burned, quite sharply cautioned him against showing such boldness again, reminding him that he had put all their lives in peril.

"Yea, verily, 'twas a grievous error," Mr. Hatch admitted dolefully, his hands pressed to the scalpless crown of his head. "Yet, dear friends, I meant well," he said further. "I have told thee of the love all Indians had for the illustrious William Penn, himself a Quaker, and

how they have ever treated our sect with consideration. And thinking of these things I opened the door to command the savages to depart in peace. I fear they did not hear me, the fire was crackling and roaring so."

What to make of their elderly friend as they heard this was such a puzzle to the boys that neither said more. Ree looked tired and pained, and seeing the expression on his face so amused John that this in connection with what the Quaker had said made him laugh aloud.

"Thou art too merry by far, young man," broke out Mr. Hatch petulantly—"too merry by far when we remember that the savages have our horses! Poor, sweet Phœbe!" he moaned. "Dost think, Ree, the Indians will return the mare to me? Can we not get the horses back?"

Kingdom refrained from speaking crossly as he felt, John's laugh having softened his displeasure, and he only said, quietly: "We will have to see about that when our lives are safe, Mr. Hatch. And when our copper-colored friends come back, you must take pistols and

help in the fighting. You can load for us at least."

The suggestion that the Indians would probably return distressed the Quaker more and more. He closed his eyes and the movement of his lips revealed that he was praying.

Somehow his simple devotions made even John feel more kindly toward the old man, and pitying him, he sought after a time to make him more comfortable in his bed by rearranging the bolster under his head and covering him up well, for as the fire had been buried in ashes all night and was nearly out, it was cold in the cabin. As he did this he noticed that that which was usually under Mr. Hatch's head or safely held in his arms was missing.

"Why, where are your saddle bags?" he asked.

It was as if an earthquake had occurred, so suddenly did the Quaker rise up in his bunk. Under the bolster, under the blankets and skins of the bed, under the bunk itself—everywhere, he searched—with utmost anxiety.

"Gone!"

The old man spoke the word as though it choked him

"Gone," he said again, his voice only a hoarse whisper, and lying down he moaned pitiably.

Ree and John could but look at one another. At first they said the saddle bags surely could not have walked away, and made light of the matter, assuring Mr. Hatch that his much-prized property must undoubtedly be about the cabin somewhere. They wondered if the Quaker might not know more of the loss than he told them.

"Was your half of that fortune letter in your saddle bags, Mr. Hatch?" Ree asked.

"Nay—I have it in my pocket; that is safe," groaned the old man.

"Well, don't worry, then, we can make some new saddle bags," put in John Jerome with pretended cheerfulness, hoping to cause the Quaker to tell why he was so grieved over his loss.

The remark was unheeded, and John gave Ree a look which told his disappointment in not learning something about the bags' contents. But Kingdom was thinking; could it have been Duff who had led the attack upon the cabin? If not, who was it?—Killdeer was the only other one likely to do such a thing.

"No one came inside the cabin while the door was open, did there, Mr. Hatch?" Ree asked.

"Yea, verily, I think so."

"Who?"

"I think an Indian came in and that I smote him with my open hand upon his head as he ran out again."

"Do you think he carried off your saddle bags? Was it that man Duff?" Kingdom quickly inquired.

"Verily, verily, I do not know—I do not know," came the very unsatisfactory answer, and the old man covered his face with the blanket of his bunk.

John's patience was so nearly gone that he would have told Theodore Hatch "a thing or

two" then and there, but Ree, seeing what he was about to do, shook his head and the harsh words were not spoken.

"It looks very much as though Duff had rounded up those Indians—Chippewas, I think —and had come here for the very purpose of committing this robbery. I am sorry you opened the door, Mr. Hatch."

"Yea, verily," the Quaker answered.

"But if they have got what they wanted, they will hardly be coming back," Ree went on, still looking out of a loop-hole. "You keep close watch, though, John, and I will get some breakfast."

In a little while a fire was blazing on the broad hearth, and it did much to dispel the gloom from the minds of the two boys and from the cabin. But it could not pacify the Quaker, who, by this time, was denouncing his own carelessness in opening the door, one minute, and denouncing Duff, Killdeer and all the Indians in general, the next. Occasionally, too, he prayed forgive-

ness for having ever been tempted to try to obtain the mysterious hidden fortune.

Mr. Hatch, though not seriously wounded, would not rise to eat breakfast, and the two boys sat down by themselves, still discussing the attack upon them, and trying to decide who the Indians were.

Ree believed they were Chippewas from somewhere near the mouth of the Cuyahoga river on Lake Erie. He was saying that they were surely strange Indians, for all those living in the vicinity of the cabin were still absent from their homes, when with a sudden crash there came the sound of a rifle shot close at hand, and a bullet struck the wooden platter on the table between the lads, spinning it squarely into the fire.

"When will we learn to be careful?" Kingdom exclaimed quite coolly; but springing to his feet ready to fire, he peered out between the logs at the side of the cabin where the stable had stood.

John was on the alert no less quickly.

"There he goes," he cried. "It's Killdeer!"

At the speed of a deer the Indian was running across the clearing to the cover of the woods. Killdeer it was, and he must have approached the cabin no less quickly than he left it, for from end to end of the clearing no person had been in sight only a minute before.

"Can it be that he and Duff have gone into partnership?" asked Ree, speaking more to himself than to John.

"I'll bet that's just what they've done!" the latter exclaimed. "Killdeer would do anything."

"No," Ree declared, after further reflection, "don't you remember what Beaver Hair and Long Arrow said? That Killdeer saw Duff kill Black Eagle and would avenge the murder?"

"But who else than Duff would want to steal those saddle-bags?"

"Then, we will agree that Killdeer had nothing to do with the band which was here this morning, and is prowling by himself, as usual."

"But I am pretty sure the fellow that Ring keeled over was Killdeer," John persisted.

"They'll all bear watching," Ree replied, "and we are likely to have some excitement to-night, if not before."

It had already been suggested that preparations for another attack, when night came, must be made, or the cabin must be abandoned, and Kingdom's remark indicated that he expected to hold the fort. It was agreed then that while the boys worked at closing up every chink in the cabin walls, bringing in a large supply of wood and water, and putting everything in as strong a position of defense as possible, Theodore Hatch should watch that no Indian came in sight unobserved.

The saddest task the two boys had to perform they did first. The body of their faithful dog, cold and stiff and covered with blood, they placed upon the half-burned logs and poles of the stable, which they piled together, making a hot fire. Therein poor Ring was cremated. He had been a true friend, and it was no fault of

his that his finding of Ichabod Nesbit's snuff-box containing the fortune letter had resulted in so much trouble for his masters. For if the letter had not fallen into their hands, Duff, Dexter and Quilling would have found it and gone on their way. Surely it would have been better so, both Ree and John agreed.

A plan of which the boys had long thought came to them again as they worked. They wished to dig a tunnel from the floor of their cabin down to a point on a level with the water of the river which was just back of, and thirty feet lower than their house. The time was too short, however, to do the work that day. Moreover, without their canoe the tunnel might not be of much use, for Theodore Hatch could not swim, and, notwithstanding that he was positively a burden and not over-appreciative of what was done for him, he could not be abandoned.

The task of making all secure went on rapidly, despite the burns and aches the boys suffered. They stopped not at noon, though the

Quaker grumbled that he was very hungry, and so it was that, as the sun, which all day had been obscured by low, cold clouds, was going down, the two friends saw their cabin in better condition than ever before.

The boys had finished a walk of inspection all around their house, and each went to carry in a great armful of wood to add to the supply within, when suddenly there rang in their ears a short, sharp, thrilling cry.

Quick as frogs started from some sunny bank, they were diving into the cabin, when a second whoop— it was not a war-cry—reassured them.

Dashing across the clearing on a large, handsome, sorrel horse, guided only by a single rawhide strap about its nose, and riding bareback, his feathered head-dress and black hair streaming in the wind behind him, was an Indian. In a second, almost, he had sped up the slope and come close to the cabin. He reined his horse high upon its hind feet and leaped to the ground —Captain Pipe, the famous chief of the Delawares.

CHAPTER IX

THE MASSACRE OF THE MORAVIANS.

With demeanor as cool and calm as though he had seen the boys but an hour before, Captain Pipe shook hands with them. He made no reference to his long absence fighting against the whites in western Ohio. He made no reference to his sensational parting with the boys the last time he had seen them, at which time, during their former residence near his town, he had, in a haughty manner, practically told them to leave the Delaware village. That was upon the eve of the departure of the Indians to take up the battle-axe.

With quiet friendliness in his tones he now said, after the exchange of formal greetings:

"Young white brothers' horses are at the town of the Delawares. Hopocon has come to tell the young Long-knives this. Their cabin was attacked by the Redmen and their horses were stolen. One horse must go to the squaw of Gahonglas, who was shot by my white brothers. It shall be the gray mare. Then will the hatchet be buried by the young Long-knives and the Delawares. Hopocon has spoken."

"Chief Hopocon is right," answered Kingdom, falling into the Indian's style of speech. "Chief Hopocon is just. The Redmen attacked our cabin, but without provocation. One was killed. Chief Hopocon says it was Gahonglas who died. Gahonglas would have killed us had he not been shot as we defended our property and our lives. The gray mare of which Chief Hopocon speaks is not the property of my brother who is with me here, nor of myself, but belongs to one who took no part in the fighting —a Quaker who loves the Delawares. He is in the cabin now."

"Come right in, Chief. We will get supper,

and you can get acquainted with our friend the Quaker."

It was not easy for John to adopt the formal way of talking used by many of the Indians, and he did not try.

As the boys turned to enter the cabin, they found Theodore Hatch standing in the doorway.

"I am glad to shake thee by the hand," said the Quaker as Ree presented the Delaware chieftain. "Thou hast a lovely daughter, and she can tell thee, Chief Hopocon, all that my young friends here did for thy people whilst thou wert away. They were fed by us when much in need, and the dapple mare, Chief Hopocon, should not be taken from me."

"We will talk that all over later, Mr. Hatch," said Ree, leading the way into the cabin.

The early twilight was fast sinking into darkness. Among the hills to the north and east the wolves were howling—in full cry upon the trail of some lone deer, it may have been, and a horned owl hooted near at hand. Accustomed as the two boys were to such sounds, they could

not but notice them this night, a feeling of such quiet and security had come to them.

In but a few minutes there had been a tremendous change in their situation. The prospect of a night of fighting, the end of which no man could foresee, had been turned to the certainty of a night of rest and quiet, and the long weeks of danger and bloodshed all about them would now be succeeded by peace.

Captain Pipe, or Hopocon (his Indian name), would permit no more such conduct, the lads were sure. Moreover, the return of the Indians meant profitable trade with them. True, they had been killing and scalping white soldiers, and the soldiers and settlers had been making war on them; but this was not the affair of Return Kingdom and John Jerome, who had set out to live at peace with the Redmen, and both boys felt better this night than for many a day.

"When did you get back, Chief?" asked John, as the dignified old man seated himself.

In answer Captain Pipe said that only that day had he and his warriors returned. About

the same time there had arrived at the Delaware town a part of the band of Chippewas which had made the attack on the cabin, learning the particulars of which, he (Captain Pipe) had at once ordered that there be no further attack, and had set about immediately to settle the trouble peaceably.

As was the custom among the Indians, Captain Pipe thought that those who had killed one of the Chippewas should make reparation to the family of him who was slain. It was for this reason that he suggested that the Quaker's mare be given to the squaw widow of Gahonglas. The other horse, he said, would be returned to its owners.

"Was it a white man whom the red brothers call Spotted Face who brought the Chippewas to fight us?" Ree asked. "Or were the Chippewas a wandering band, who did not know that my friends and I dwell at peace with the Indians, and so took up the hatchet against us?"

"Killdeer says he was shot and wounded by the young Long-knife and made a prisoner,"

the chief answered quietly. "He got away at last and drifted in a canoe to the great lake. He told his story to the Chippewas gathered there after hard fighting with the white man's army."

Concluding his brief statement in the "rest you know" manner, Captain Pipe accepted the invitation John gave presently to sit up to the table and eat.

So it was Killdeer who had led the attack upon the cabin, Ree reflected; and then he told Captain Pipe very earnestly the story of their experiences with that strange, lone Indian—how he had shot at the fellow in self-defense, then finding him only wounded, had taken him to the cabin to care for him and to learn why he made such persistent, skulking warfare upon the white people and to persuade him to be at peace with them.

"The war of Killdeer is his own war. Listen to all I say. On his arm are many painted circles; at his belt are many scalps. More marks of black—more scalps—heap more—no differ-

ence—still Killdeer shall make war on the Pale-faces always," Captain Pipe answered almost defiantly.

Forgetting the dignity of the chieftain and the likelihood of giving offense, John Jerome was so resentful of the Delaware's manner that, in a tone more defiant still than the Indian had used, he said:

"Why? Why should Killdeer go prowling about shooting men down from behind? Why should he carry on his sneaking warfare against those who have not harmed him and who wish to live at peace?"

Captain Pipe gave the bold boy a quiet, fatherly, very sober look of reproof for having spoken so hastily, and then, looking from one to the other of the two friends, spoke slowly and distinctly:

"Chief Hopocon has told Killdeer that he shall not harm the young white brothers—the friends of the Delawares. The Gentle Maiden has told her father of the kindness of the young white braves when Hopocon and his warriors

were gone from their home fires and there was no meat—no beans—no corn. And Killdeer harkened to the words of Chief Hopocon that the young Palefaces be not harmed. But also has Killdeer heard the words of Hopocon that he shall bury the hatchet never with the Long-knives, excepting only the young white brothers and those who are in their cabin. For he shall kill and scalp always, and still must he be taken at last to the Great Spirit land before he has ended his war. If he lived long as the great oak trees, he still could not right the wrong he has suffered. Only with many scalps can he go to his father who is in the spirit land.

"For Killdeer is the son of a brave warrior called Great Thunder, by the Palefaces. Hear of his wrongs and listen. The Christian whites taught Great Thunder to pray. And Great Thunder laid down his hatchet, threw away his scalping-knife. Great Thunder was a Moravian. My white brothers know how he died. They know how he and many, many more were killed—chopped to pieces— and all the while

they prayed, as the missionaries had taught them—making no more fight than a wounded fawn when hungry wolves leap onto it. And my white brothers know that of all the Moravians deceived by the forked tongues of the Paleface cowards, only two escaped the hatchet and the scalping-knife of the lying Long-knives.

"Two boys—one was Killdeer— saved their lives. Through a hole in the floor of the house where the praying Indians were put, Killdeer got into a cellar by night and from there escaped into the woods. In the darkness of the forest he lay through all the night. He heard the death-songs of his kindred and friends shut up like bear cubs in the houses of logs. When came the light of day he went near. Still he heard the death-song sung; still he heard the supplications of the praying Indians, the Moravians, rising to the Great Spirit of the Palefaces.

"Louder than any other was the voice of Great Thunder. Different from any other's were the words of Great Thunder, crying out

to the Great Spirit of the Palefaces whom he had served. And he spoke words which smote hard upon the ears of Killdeer, his son, hiding in the forest. For in his voice were the words that he had no fear of death and that he believed in the Great Spirit; but he prayed that his son, who had escaped, might live to repay the treachery of the Long-knives. In his voice was the prayer that all his life long would Killdeer make war upon the Palefaces and spare none—make war—war—war! Avenge the slaughter of the innocent Moravians! Take many lives for each Moravian life till he could but walk under the load of Paleface scalps he carried.

"And further Great Thunder spoke, praying that to Killdeer, who had escaped, would the Great Spirit show the way to live long that greater might be the price he should reap from the Paleface cowards to pay for the killing of the Moravians—killed even as the fox kills the turkeys just out of the shells of the eggs.

"So did Killdeer, on his knees in the brush

which hid him, hear the words of Great Thunder, his father; but he knew not to cry in answer that he heard. For Killdeer had been taught to pray and to read the signs in books of the white missionaries, and to plant corn and beans, as a woman. He had not been taught the ways of war, nor how to shoot. He had not been taught to defy his enemies, though the torture fire leaped hot about him. And he feared to answer to his father's words, knowing that the Paleface cowards were all about.

"Yet did the Indian boy, the son of Great Thunder, wait and listen, and now harken to my words. He heard the noise of the killing begin. He went nearer and nearer and came to a spot from which he could see the Paleface dogs strike the defenceless Moravians down. With hatchets and clubs and spears were the men and the women and even the papooses upon their mothers' backs struck down and killed, till the ground was slippery as ice with blood.

"In one great cabin were the men, in another the women and children. All were dealt the

blows of death. Like caged birds among which starved wolves have been let loose, did the unhappy Moravians fall—one upon another, their blood flowing like water from a hillside when the rain pours down. And ever as the butchering went on there arose the gentle songs the missionaries had taught the praying Indians to sing—ever the curses of the Paleface dogs, ever their laughs and shouts, together with the groans of the dying and the cries of the young ones till hatchets silenced them."

Captain Pipe paused and his stern face and piercing eyes took on a look of sorrow. He looked at the two boys and he looked at the Quaker. Each one sat silent, deeply moved by his recital of the awful massacre of the ninety-six Christian Indians by white soldiers at Gnadenhutten, March 8, 1782. For a full minute not a word was spoken, and the crackling, blazing hickory wood in the fireplace made the only sound. Then, in a milder tone, Captain Pipe spoke further:

"So did Killdeer see Great Thunder, his

father, killed. For from the place where Killdeer was hiding he looked into the door of the house where the Moravian men were. A woman had prayed the Paleface cowards in the name of the Great Spirit, which she called God, to show mercy. The answer was foul words. Yet did Great Thunder also lift his voice and he asked that his life be taken, but that the young children, who could do no harm, be spared. Killdeer heard the answer given him. It was, 'Death to every blasted red dog of you!'

"Even as the words were spoken a Paleface devil with a hammer crushed the skull of Great Thunder in the way the white men kill their cattle. And Killdeer saw him and remembered —saw his hair, which was black and curly—his nose, which was large and red with much fire-water—his eyes, which were little and black, and the marks of the small-pox which were on the face of the dog.

"'I think I've done pretty well and my blasted arm's played out; go on in the same way.' These were the words the Paleface devil

spoke. Then to another he gave the hammer. Killdeer saw and heard. But he was only a boy; he had not been taught the ways of war else would he have watched and waited further. He ran far and fast. In a Moravian town, also upon the river near, were yet other praying Indians. To them Killdeer hastened. He found them fleeing. For the news had come to them that these Long-knives, while pretending to be their friends, sought their lives and scalps. So Killdeer told them of the butchering of their brethren, and went with them.

"And when they had burned the houses in which were the dead bodies of the praying Indians, the Long-knives also traveled quickly to the other Moravian town. They found no one. For the Indians had learned of their coming; else they, also, would have been deceived and murdered. So were the Moravians gone, hurrying to the plains of Sandusky, and so were their lives saved.

"Hear yet these other words. The young Paleface friends and the Quaker know that Hop-

ocon speaks truly. No lie is upon his lips to make excuses for Killdeer. For Hopocon took the Moravian boy to his home and showed him the ways of war; taught him to forget not the words of Great Thunder, his father. It is known to all the Delawares that this is true. Yet have our people told nothing of Killdeer. His war is his own war. Hopocon's hand and others fell hard upon the Paleface dogs at a later day when the white chief Crawford sang his death-song; and he cannot be sorry for any who fall in the silent war of the son of Great Thunder.

"So Killdeer shall prick more black bands upon his arm; at his belt more scalps shall be hung. The words of Great Thunder still call out to him. Yet has Killdeer harkened to the words of Hopocon, his teacher. The young Paleface friends, and the Quaker, who is also the friend of the Delawares, shall not be harmed."

Silence again followed as Captain Pipe ceased speaking. It was broken at last by the Quaker.

"Chief Hopocon, or Pipe, as thou art sometimes called, thy friend Killdeer hast already taken my scalp—see?"—and the old gentleman bent down his head.—"Now wouldst thou also deprive me of my mare? Verily, though I am a man of peace, I cannot blame the young Moravian that he seeks revenge for the cruel murder of his sire and friends; and though sorely grieved to know that my head has known the scalping-knife, I can forgive him, yea, cheerfully. But my mare, Captain Pipe—I cannot part with my mare, Phœbe."

CHAPTER X

DREAMS OF DEATH.

Return Kingdom and John Jerome had exchanged very significant looks as Captain Pipe described the white man who struck the blow which killed Great Thunder, the father of Killdeer.

Was Duff that man? The description exactly fitted him. Did Killdeer now remember him, if so?

These were the questions in the minds of the boys, but neither wished to speak in the presence of the Delaware chief. So, avoiding that subject, though he could not help thinking of it, Ree said:

"I do think, Captain Pipe, that our Quaker

friend should have back his mare. Already he has suffered the loss of a pair of saddle bags which he greatly valued. They were stolen from him by some one who entered our house during the scrimmage of this morning. Because Captain Pipe is our friend and because of our wish for peace, we will pay in goods from our store for the death of Gahonglas, but it must be remembered that our barn was burned and the Chippewas should make good that loss."

Captain Pipe was reluctant to agree to the terms Kingdom proposed, but he did at last do so. He completely ignored, however, a request made by Mr. Hatch, who, as usual, had suddenly changed his mind, and now asked that Killdeer be compelled to return to him his scalp lock.

All night the greatest of the Delawares (save only Buckongahelas, who was at the head of a village farther to the south) remained in the cabin of the young traders. They wished him to sleep in their bed, but he declined and lay down on a bearskin before the fireplace. He departed early in the morning, riding his hand-

some sorrel and carrying a variety of presents the boys gave him.

John Jerome had not refrained from asking Captain Pipe how he had come into possession of his fine horse. He succeeded in finding out that, as he and Ree had from the first suspected, the animal had belonged to an officer of General St. Clair's army which the Indians had put to rout several weeks earlier. However, that was not their affair, and as during the day they were again placed in possession of their own horse, and the Quaker his, two young braves from the Delaware town returning them, they were not disposed to quarrel.

Except for the mysterious disappearance of Theodore Hatch's saddle-bags, all knowledge of which was denied by the Indians, the troubles of the young pioneers now seemed to be over. It was a source of deep satisfaction to the boys to feel that they no longer had need to be constantly on their guard against the prowling lone Indian, Killdeer, and they began to look forward to a pleasant and prosperous spring and

summer. Soon it would be time for sugar making, and that must be followed by the planting of crops. There was much work to be done.

The Indians came frequently now, also, to trade, and manifested no spirit but friendliness. Killdeer was never among these visitors, though the boys understood that he was staying at the Delaware town, nursing his wounds; but the young friends were glad he did not come. For, while they realized that he had suffered a great wrong, and, putting themselves in his place, knew how they would feel had they seen their relatives and friends butchered like sheep, they could not bring themselves to have any feeling but one of dread and dislike of the fellow. It seemed so horrible that he should be giving his whole life to a secret, sneaking warfare against innocent travelers and other white people.

Often, too, the boys talked of Duff and the likelihood that Killdeer recognized in him the brutal slayer of his father; and, much as they disliked the unscrupulous white man, they hoped he had taken their advice and returned East.

He would most certainly be killed, otherwise, for now the Indians were about the woods every day, and his hiding place would surely be discovered.

A week passed. The soft, mild weather, which had followed the January thaw, disappeared, and storms of sleet and rain came in its place. In the early evening of an unusually stormy day, the two boys and Theodore Hatch, having just completed the building of a new barn, were celebrating the occasion with an extraordinarily good turkey-stew supper, when there came a gentle knock at the door.

"Come in, the latch string's out," called John, but Ree arose and pulled the door wide open.

Wet, cold, his hair filled with sleet, his clothes half frozen, his pale haggard face showing that he had suffered both from hunger and sickness, there staggered into the room an altogether wretched-appearing man. It was Duff.

"Cæsar's ghost!" exclaimed John Jerome. "What—"

A quick glance from Ree, and John did not utter the none too hospitable words he was about to speak.

"Why, you are nearly frozen, man! Let me have your cap. Here, sit down by the fire. It's a bad storm to-night."

In spite of their enmity, and though he knew Duff to be a genuine villain, Ree's quick intuition seemed to tell him that sickness and suffering had driven the wretch to ask mercy and kindness of those whom he had injured and on whom he had not the least claim of friendship; and his humane spirit prompted him to grant these before they were asked in words. Perhaps he was too kind, in this instance, at least. Such natures as his are likely to be imposed upon, but they rarely remember it, and prefer to be kind to all rather than turn hard-heartedly against any person, lest an injustice be done.

"Blasted stormy," said Duff, replying to Kingdom's remark. And then his eye fell upon Theodore Hatch, plainly much embarrassed by the visitor's presence.

Calmly, but with an ugly glitter about his eyes, Duff looked squarely at the Quaker, the latter returning his stare, but shrinking back as though decidedly uncomfortable.

"Good evenin'," said Duff, at the end of a half minute of this pantomimic performance.

"Thou art cold and wet," answered the Quaker, in an unsteady voice, stating a fact which was so strongly self-evident that John, who had been closely observing the two, smiled in amusement.

Ree's back was turned. He was looking into the sadly reduced contents of the box in which medicines were kept; but he was aware of all that was taking place and wondered, with John, when and where these two very different men might have met before, that each seemed to find the other's company so unpleasant. But he, and John also, attributed their mutual discomfort to the circumstances relating to the hidden fortune letter, and nothing more.

Soon Ree had prepared a hot drink which Duff swallowed greedily, and then he was asked

to partake of the turkey-stew, which he did with great avidity. As they ate, the unexpected guest told his hosts, as John's questions drew him out, that, since the time he last saw Ree and John—the day in the woods when an arrow had so unceremoniously lifted the feathers from his head—he had scarcely left his home in the cave. He said he had had very little powder, and therefore little to eat.

He would have started to Fort Pitt, he stated, when the snow went off, but felt unable, and feared he might die upon the way. Hoping he would become stronger and better he waited. Instead he grew worse. The knowledge that the body of Dexter, which he had buried in the snow near the cave, was now exposed to view by the rain and thaw was a thought always in his mind, too, and he could not endure it.

For this reason he had decided to visit the cabin and beg to be allowed to remain a day or two until he should be able to undertake the tramp of one hundred miles through the woods to Fort Pitt or Pittsburg.

"It is the wisest thing you can do," said Ree seriously.

"But look a-here, Mr. Duff," said John Jerome, in admonitory tones, "you want to keep that temper of yours under control, and you want to stay inside and keep out of sight if any Indians come around. Because Killdeer is on your trail as sure as shooting, and we don't want another row with him or anybody else. Killdeer thinks you are the man who killed his father, Great Thunder, at the massacre of the Moravians, several years ago."

John could scarcely have told what prompted him to make this remark, except that he thoroughly disliked the fellow and wished to give him to understand that the quicker he should be gone the better; but both he and Ree closely observed the effects the words had.

At first Duff's haggard face grew intensely angry, but the next moment a convulsive shudder as of fear shook his wasted body. Another and another fit of trembling followed, but he spoke no word.

"We had another brush with the Indians the other morning," said Ree in a friendlier tone.

"And we were thinking at the time that you were mixed up with them," put in John quickly. "At any rate, Mr. Hatch's saddle bags disappeared during the fight."

"Did the Indians attack you?"

The question, as Duff asked it, was sufficient to show that he had known nothing of the affray. But it was an effort for him to suppress the anger John's remark caused. Yet he added, addressing himself only to Ree:

"That is one crime, at least, which I didn't commit; I know nothing of the saddle bags and care less. I suppose you searched for them."

Theodore Hatch had not returned to the table after Duff's arrival, and was now lying on his bunk. He seemed to pay no attention to the conversation. This the two boys considered strange because of the great care with which he had always guarded the property spoken of, but the subject was dropped, and Ree briefly told Duff of the attack upon the stable and cabin.

A little later all retired for the night, the boys giving their bunk to the none too welcome visitor, because Ree pitied him, and John would do nothing which he knew to be contrary to his chum's wishes, even though it meant to sleep on the floor while a man he detested and despised occupied his bed.

Neither of the boys slept well. Each was busy with his thoughts and each felt a secret fear that the enmity between Duff and Theodore Hatch might lead to trouble. And often as they awoke from the dozes in which they spent the greater part of the night they found the Quaker awake. Sometimes he was sitting up in bed, sometimes pretending to be asleep, and once a flickering flame of fire rising above the ashes, showed him to be out of bed, peering intently toward the bunk where Duff was sleeping.

The coming of morning was a relief to the young friends after these unusual actions on the part of the Quaker. The latter did not, however, rise when the boys did, but seeing that they

were up, turned over in his bunk and slept soundly.

Duff awoke as the preparations for breakfast were going forward, and though he said he felt much better, he made no move to get up. Presently when John had gone to the stable to feed the horses, he rose up in bed and seeing that Mr. Hatch was sleeping, motioned to Ree to approach.

"Bend down low," he said. "I ain't got much to say, but it's important. You've been kinder to me than I deserve. There's not much coming to me from you, I know; but I want to ask you to let me stay here just a day or two till I pick up a bit, and then I'll light out for Pittsburg. That Killdeer is going to kill me. Three times I dreamed it before I came here and last night I dreamed it again."

"It is true that it isn't safe for you to stay here, but we will keep you until you are able to travel," Ree answered quietly.

"Much obliged—very—but that's not all I

want to say," Duff continued. "Is that Quaker still sleeping?"

Kingdom nodded as he bent lower.

"Because," Duff went on in a whisper, "I don't want him to know what I am going to say till I'm gone, anyhow; it would only make trouble. But that treasure buried near Philadelphia is mine and he has no right to it. Oh, I know you don't believe me—I don't expect you to, because the half of that letter you have seen— But never mind that. It's a long story and it would do no good to tell it. All I want to say is, that if anything happens to me I want you to have my share of that treasure—which is all of it. And you needn't be afraid anybody will ever come to claim it."

"Now, why don't you and Mr. Hatch get together right here and settle this matter, Duff?" Ree asked, almost impatiently. "You have one half of the letter telling where the treasure is—he has the other. You claim he has no right to the fortune and he claims you have no right to

any part of that letter or the money either. It has been a bad business—"

"Blast his crooked tongue! He shall never have one shilling of that money! The blasted old—"

Duff's temper had escaped control again, and in a hoarse whisper he was heaping imprecations upon Theodore Hatch when Ree stopped him.

"Not one word more! You will have to hold your temper while you stay here, Mr. Duff."

"I will turn over and get some more sleep," the fellow answered, half growling, half submissively, and as he closed his eyes Ree thought he had never seen a more unhappy, disagreeable and altogether wretched and despicable face. He was sorry Fate had sent the creature begging mercy, and though his sense of humanity would not allow him to turn the fellow out, he hoped he would soon be gone.

Presently all was ready for breakfast except the broiling of the venison upon the hot coals soon to be raked to the front of the fire; and as

John had not come in, Ree walked out to call him. His doing so, leaving Duff and Theodore Hatch together, though both were apparently asleep, was the beginning of three tragic occurrences never to be forgotten, and following so fast one upon another that they left the boy pioneers horrified and heart-sick, their cheerful spirits for the time being completely crushed.

Though there had been other crimes and bloody conflicts deeply impressing them, none had ever come so closely home to the lads as those which were to follow the mere chance by which the Quaker and the robber were left alone together for only a few minutes.

In after days Ree blamed himself for leaving the cabin as he did; but he really knew, and John knew, that no blame could attach to him. The end, circumstances afterward proved, must have been substantially the same, though he had been more careful.

CHAPTER XI

THE MURDER OF THEODORE HATCH.

As Ree stepped out of the cabin door, which was left open, except in severe weather, to admit the light, he noticed John standing near the river some distance from the cabin, and called to him. In response John motioned to Ree to join him and wondering what his friend had discovered, Kingdom set off at a gentle run to see what was wanted.

"I declare, I believe there are beaver along here," said John as Ree came up. "See, aren't those beaver tracks in the sand there? Maybe they are establishing a colony not far away. There's a fine place for a dam near where the two rivers come together above here."

That there were beavers elsewhere along the river the boys well knew, but none were near, and the likelihood that the animals might settle in the vicinity and build a dam and houses offered a genuinely interesting prospect.

"We better not go far away just now," Ree replied, "but some time we will take a look all along the water and see if there are beavers near here. Those tracks have been washed away so by the ripples and waves that it's hard to tell whether a beaver made them, and the ground is so frozen that none can be seen except those just at the water's edge."

"I want to look just a little farther for more," said John, and allowing him to have his way, Ree walked with him up the stream. They passed beyond the clearing and then, as bushes prevented a near approach to the water, went on to a point at which they could climb down the bank to the river's margin again.

Finding nothing the boys searched only a little while, then started to return to the cabin.

"I'll be the first to touch the shanty," called John, and broke into a rapid run.

Ree knew very well that at foot racing he was no match for his lighter, more slender companion, but he also ran forward, making no effort, however, to overtake his friend. Seeing this, John slackened his speed when half way up the hill, and together the boys reached the cabin door, panting and laughing.

John was the first to enter. A shriek of horror flew from his throat and he sank upon a stool.

"My stars!" These were Kingdom's words, and he stood for an instant dazed.

On the floor, partially dressed, as he always slept, lay Theodore Hatch, his face covered with blood, a gaping wound just above his forehead. The pallor of death was upon him and his eyes were shut. The bed Duff had occupied was empty. He was gone.

There were signs of a struggle, but it could not have been a violent one. A single stool was

upset and the clothing of the Quaker's bunk was somewhat disarranged.

"It is all my fault," Ree groaned, kneeling at the Quaker's side.

Tearing open the old gentleman's shirt he found that the heart was still feebly beating. John had already brought water and Ree washed away the blood still warm upon the brow of the dying man. Together then the lads lifted the body and placed it on the bed, and quickly, anxiously, sought to revive their stricken friend; but the flickering flame of the Quaker's life was fast going out. Their efforts were almost in vain.

At last, however, Mr. Hatch opened his eyes and there was a feeble light of consciousness in them.

"Killdeer—tell—Pipe it was—Killdeer," he managed to say, very low and in a gasping way. "I—am dying."

John turned away that Ree might not see his tears, but the latter was bending over the Quaker holding a stimulating liquor to his lips.

He feared the man would die falsely believing the lone Indian had killed him.

"No, it was Duff, wasn't it, Mr. Hatch? Do you hear me?" the boy tenderly asked. "It could not have been Killdeer. We were away from the cabin only a few minutes."

A struggle of some kind was going on in the old man's mind, and, though his eyes were closed, his brow moved and his hands clutched and unclutched themselves convulsively, indicating his mental distress.

"It was—Killdeer," he answered after a little. "But don't—tell Captain Pipe. I—forgive—him as—I—hope—to—be—forgiven. I have—sinned—grievously. Is Phœbe—safe?"

"She is in the stable, Mr. Hatch. You must lie still and not talk any more now."

There were tears in both Ree's eyes and voice.

"Nay, I—am—dying. Let me—see—Phœbe."

John hastened to the stable and in a minute had led the pretty, intelligent mare into the cabin to the dying master's bedside.

Poor Phœbe! Well as any one present she

knew, or seemed to know, what it all meant, and placed her nose affectionately in the Quaker's hand.

"Sweet Phœbe," the master whispered, and closed his eyes. "My—truest—friend. Take good—care—of her—Ree. I give her—to thee—and John—and—all I have. But my saddle bags—I—I threw—them away—in the—river. I—have—sinned—grievously."

With his face buried in Phœbe's mane, John was softly crying, and the tears ran fast down Ree's cheek as he sat on the bunk at the Quaker's side, leaning down to catch any word which he might utter. He knew the end was very near, and could not speak.

Again the eyes of the wounded man opened and looked into those of his beloved horse whose almost human, sorrowful gaze had not once left the master's face.

"Sweet—Phœbe."

A little sigh came from the Quaker's lips, his eyelids dropped drowsily, and like the closing of a day of both storm and sunshine, when the

troubled air grows calm as the sun goes down, the spirit flew away to Him whom it had always devoutly wished to serve, though oftimes led astray.

For a little while the hushed, solemn scene remained unbroken. Ree was the first to speak.

"Poor Phœbe," he said, and stroked the animal's foretop. It was as if she knew that a new and not unkind master was speaking to her now, for the mare raised her head close to the boy's face.

"You must go back to the barn, Phœbe," Ree said in a choking voice, and leading the intelligent creature only by putting his hand upon her neck, John took the mare away.

It was a painful task to Ree to place the hands of the dead upon the breast from which the breath of life had gone, and put the body in an attitude of composure, but he did so, and covered it with a blanket, then went to the stable. He found John leaning against the door, still softly sobbing, and took both his hands in his.

"I never knew what death was like, before,"

he said, thinking of the faraway little churchyard where, under the elms, as a child, he had seen his mother buried. "But we must be brave, John. This is a terrible thing and if it is Duff who has done this murder, as it almost certainly is, we must follow him. We must catch him and take him to Fort Pitt for trial."

"Why did Mr. Hatch think it was Killdeer who struck him, Ree?"

"I cannot tell. It is the strangest thing! But of this we may be sure, if we find that the portion of that letter which Mr. Hatch had is gone, it was Duff who committed the murder. And if we are to catch him, John, we've got to be men—and lose no time no matter how we feel."

The silver snuff box in which Theodore Hatch had for a long time carried the half of the fortune letter, the box in which his half had been found among the bones of Ichabod Nesbit, was gone. The boys well knew the pocket in which the Quaker had carried it. Not only was the box not in that or any other pocket, but the most thorough search failed to reveal it.

"Broil some meat, John, and I will look for Duff's trail. We will have something to eat, then start right out. We can travel faster than Duff. It's a wonder he didn't take one of the horses!"

While Jerome busied himself as suggested, Kingdom began a minute examination of the frozen ground about the cabin. There was no snow and footsteps made little if any impression on the hard earth. It was really remarkable that, in his weakened condition, Duff could have disappeared so completely within the short time his opportunity allowed him.

"He would hardly try to cross the river, at any rate," Ree told himself, going to the edge of the bluff and looking down the steep descent back of the cabin to the water. And then his eye fell upon something which immediately interested him very much.

Swinging on a branch of a stubby bush which clung for life to the almost perpendicular side of the slope leading down to the river's edge, were the Quaker's saddle bags. Why had he

thrown them away after having guarded them so closely for so long? And why had he concealed the fact, pretending that they had been stolen by some one who entered the cabin the morning of the fight?

It was more than curiosity which prompted Ree to make an effort to recover the bags. It might be that they, after all, contained the fortune letter and it was readily to be believed that except to secure the letter, Duff would have had no motive for killing the Quaker sufficiently strong to make him take the risk.

If it were, indeed, Killdeer, who had struck the fatal blow, was it not extremely likely that Duff had been frightened, and had fled as he saw the lone Indian steal into the cabin?

Calling John to help him, Ree procured a long pole on the end of which he fastened a running noose which he made with a strip of buckskin. Holding tightly to his chum's hand, John crept far as he could down the steep, high bank, and with the pole in his right hand began his task of fishing.

The saddle bags were on an under branch of the bush and partly concealed from view, but by a fortunate swing of the pole Jerome landed the noose safely over one of them at last, and drew both up. In another minute Ree had drawn him to the top of the sharp ascent, and they hurried into the cabin.

"I feel like a pirate, going through a man's property with him lying dead in the same room," Kingdom sorrowfully declared, but he undid the fastenings of the small buckskin bags, and poured their contents upon the table.

"The snuff box is not there," said John, looking curiously at the tiny display of stockings, white kerchiefs and other clothing brought into view, together with a package of letters and a well-worn leather pouch of bulky proportions.

"I don't see anything here which should have made Mr. Hatch so afraid some one would rob him," he added. "What's in the pouch?"

Ree opened the leathern sack and turned its contents, also, upon the table.

"Only money," he said, as a number of gold pieces rolled out.

"Well, Mr. Hatch did not place so high a value on that, or he would not have thrown it away."

"It is English money, most of it," said Ree, examining different pieces, "about one hundred dollars of our money, I should guess without counting it. It must have been the letters that Mr. Hatch thought so much of. I don't know whether we have a right to look at them or not, but I think we have."

"Letters! One letter, anyway, seems to be at the bottom of all this trouble!" John exclaimed. "And there can be no harm in our looking through them."

Unwinding the long tape with which the package was bound, Ree opened to read the uppermost of the bundle of manuscripts.

"Here's something about Ichabod Nesbit the first thing," he announced in his quiet way, though eagerly interested, and John put his arm about him and looked over his shoulder.

Even before he could speak, however, a frantic yell of fright and cries for help came ringing in their ears and both boys ran quickly to the door.

Running at full sped across the clearing and headed toward the cabin was Duff. Closely following, gaining at every step, was the Indian, Killdeer, his long, black hair streaming behind him in the wind and the one brilliant red feather he wore fluttering like a leaf in a storm.

"Help!" shrieked the pursued white man, and seizing his rifle Ree sped down the hill to give assistance.

With the savage running in a direct line behind Duff, however, he dared not fire at once, and as he hesitated, the robber must have thought he did not mean to aid him. Maybe Killdeer was of the same opinion. Certain it is, he gave Ree not the slightest heed, and every bound carried him nearer his intended victim.

The awful scene described by Capt. Pipe in telling the history of the lone Indian flashed across Ree's mental vision. He saw Duff as the

murderer of Great Thunder, the father of the boy Killdeer, who had looked on unable even to protest, save in his heart, against the bloody deed. He recalled how the same Indian boy had seen scores of others of his friends and relatives struck down mercilessly as if they had been venomous snakes. He remembered the terrible secret warfare which Killdeer, in consequence of the massacre of the innocent Moravians, had carried on against all white persons, most of them likewise innocent. He knew that Duff was a murderer and a robber. But he knew it was his duty to try to save the fellow's worthless life even if it were only for the hangman.

All in a second these thoughts pressed upon Bee's mind and he ran forward at increased speed, his rifle in readiness to fire at the first opportunity.

"Fire! Shoot!" gasped Duff, in a broken yell, a hurried glance over his shoulder showing him the hatchet in the swift Indian's hand. The voice was the most despairing the forest ever echoed.

John Jerome had dashed down the slope from the cabin only a few feet behind Ree and quickly overtook him. In his thoughts, too, was the story of the outrageous killing of Great Thunder. He had no sympathy for Killdeer, but thinking of the duplicity of Duff in murdering Theodore Hatch, after he had been taken into the cabin and kindly treated, neither had he sympathy for him.

And then there came no less quickly to his mind the manner of the death of Black Eagle—murdered by Duff in cold blood. How like the vicious slaughter of Great Thunder it had been!

An unintelligible shriek and groan—a woeful cry of appeal—came again from the flying robber. His finger on the trigger, Ree took hasty aim; at the same instant, excited beyond measure, some strange impulse moved John to cry aloud the words he had heard Captain Pipe repeat:

"'I think I've done pretty well, and my blasted arm is played out; go on in the same way!'"

Duff heard and remembered, and as though he knew the words to be the sentence of death upon him, a cry of utter terror, terrible to hear, escaped his lips.

Killdeer heard the words and he, also, remembered. He knew them well, and now, not thirty yards from Duff, the short, sharp, savage cry he gave and the fearful look of triumph upon his face foreshadowed his revenge.

Ree Kingdom heard the words as he pressed the trigger, and the bullet from his rifle flew harmlessly into the air.

CHAPTER XII

THE MORAVIAN'S REVENGE.

By what chance, by what trick of fate, Killdeer stole up to the cabin of Return Kingdom and John Jerome at the moment he did—the most unfortunate minute possible for Duff—is a problem different persons will solve in different ways. Some will say it merely happened so, and maybe they are right; not one of us can positively declare them to be wrong.

It was just as Duff had risen and stealthily stolen from the pocket of the sleeping Quaker the silver snuff box containing the fortune letter, that a swift patter of footsteps outside caused him to leap back to his bed. He thought it was Kingdom and Jerome returning; but it was Killdeer.

Long had the Indian waited his chance to steal upon Theodore Hatch when the young Palefaces were not there to protect him. He saw the lads going up the river as he hid near the clearing's edge. Swiftly he darted across the open space and up the hillside.

The cabin door stood open. He paused but for a second to peep inside, then sprang within.

Disturbed in his sleep by Duff's touch, Theodore Hatch instinctively put his hand to his pocket to feel if the snuff box was safe, as he did a thousand times a day when wide awake. He failed to touch the object he was seeking and then suddenly awakened, he sprang from his bed.

As he did so, Killdeer hurled himself upon him. One swift blow from his deadly hatchet sent the Quaker down.

With horror-stricken eyes Duff saw the blow struck and recognized the Indian. Escape was his only thought. He dared not undertake to fight the powerful young savage. In greatest haste and fright he fled from the cabin.

Ordinarily Killdeer would not have left a victim after striking but a single blow; much less would he have left Theodore Hatch, whom he had believed he had killed before, and for whose supposed death the thirteenth black circlet had been pricked upon his arm.

He caught but a brief glimpse of Duff as that individual darted through the doorway, but it was enough. He knew his man—long had known him. And now was the time to kill or capture him.

He had hoped to see the murderer of Great Thunder writhing at the torture stake, but he would not wait for that. He would cut the Paleface dog to pieces. Like the wind he sped from the cabin.

Duff was already half way down the hill and running as he never ran before. Fear drove illness and weakness from him. His feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground. Once he looked back. He saw Killdeer slip and fall heavily upon his side. He increased his efforts. His only hope lay in reaching the woods far enough

ahead of the savage to throw him off the track or find a hiding place. In a few more seconds he had passed the clearing and glancing back he saw no one.

"Luck at last!" he thought. "The letter I've hunted so long in my pocket, that blasted Indian left behind, and only the ground from here to Philadelphia between me and a fortune. Blast my hide! I must be careful of myself!"

Slacking his speed not a bit, Duff continued his mad race far into the woods. He neither heard nor saw the lone Indian; but he believed the savage was coming on behind, and with fortune in his grasp, he would take no chances. He overestimated his strength, however, and from sheer exhaustion he tumbled at last like a log of wood to the ground, every bone and muscle aching, his head nearly bursting with pain.

How he suffered! But he crawled close beside a great fallen tree where the wind had piled the forest leaves and partially covered himself over with them. So weak had he suddenly become that now he thought he was dying. He

could not shake the feeling off—could not rid himself of the thought of how his bones would be scattered when wolves came upon his dead body.

The idea tortured him and added to his deep misery. Never had he suffered so. But he would not die! He would not die away off here in the awful wilderness alone! A bold, cruel man ordinarily, he shivered, now his strength was gone,—shook like the coward he was at heart, in an agony of fright at the thought of death being near.

Then a new idea came to the unhappy wretch. He would go back to the cabin; he would tell Kingdom and Jerome that he and Theodore Hatch had been talking over the fortune letter and agreeing on a settlement about it when Killdeer broke in upon them, and he ran. They would believe him; they would not guess that he had robbed the Quaker.

This thought gave the wretch fresh hope and partly restored his courage. He crawled out of his bed of leaves, and, making a wide detour to

one side that he might avoid Killdeer, who, he had no doubt, was following his trail, hurried with what speed and noiselessness he could toward the cabin.

Was it another trick of Fate, or was it the working out of Duff's richly deserved destiny that carried him directly toward the Indian he feared more than earthly creature?

Had he gone straight back along the way he came he might have escaped. As it was, he hastened straight into the danger he so eagerly wished to avoid.

Killdeer had long known of the presence of Duff, the murderer of Great Thunder, his father, in these forests. Often had he thought of the joy he would have in burning him at the torture fire. No pain he could inflict would be great enough to satisfy his vengeance; but he would spare no effort to make the suffering of the Paleface as great as possible.

He had known Duff as the man who struck Great Thunder down, from the time when he discovered him with Dexter and Quilling and

saw him, as he watched, cruelly end the life of Black Eagle. Then he had laid his plans.

When the three Palefaces made their camp and he was certain they would not, for some reason, depart at once, he had hurried to his Mingo friends, Beaver Hair and Long Arrow. They willingly agreed to assist him and not a day passed that they did not know just where Duff was and what he was doing.

They made his acquaintance that they might learn his plans, and rejoiced with Killdeer when they found that he would be staying in the woods a long time. Soon Captain Pipe and the other warriors would return and there would be a great feast to celebrate the burning at the stake of the man who had killed Great Thunder.

True, the three Indians might have built the torture fire themselves,—they could easily have captured Duff and Quilling and Dexter, too. But that was not as Killdeer wished it. He wanted Captain Pipe, who had taught him how to avenge the fiendish murder of his father, to witness the painful end of the murderer.

So, as opportunities offered themselves, when he was not scouring the woods for Paleface hunters, elsewhere, Killdeer secured the scalps of the murderer's companions, Quilling and Dexter; and Long Arrow and Beaver Hair continued to watch the one white man remaining, with zeal that never weakened.

Always they knew how Duff spent the days. Always they knew if he had meat or was hungry. But Duff very seldom saw them and no one save themselves and Killdeer knew the secret.

Even when they might have aided the Paleface boys toward whom they felt quite friendly and from whom they persuaded Killdeer at different times to stay away, asking him that Captain Pipe be allowed to say whether they should or should not be killed, the two Mingoes spoke no word, nor did anything which might betray the lone Indian's plan. Lest white hunters should seek the life of Killdeer, the Delawares, also, told nothing concerning him. It was as Captain

Pipe had ordered and he had instructed the Moravian to work as secretly as possible.

However, after that wintry day when Killdeer made the discovery that the Quaker whose scalp he carried was still a living man, he could not refrain from watching the cabin of the boy pioneers. He was willing to allow them to go unmolested until Captain Pipe returned, at least; but he was so chagrined when he reflected that one scalp at his belt represented nothing save that he had wounded a man, and that the thirteenth band upon his arm did not in fact signify a death in the great family of the Long-knives, that he was determined to kill the Quaker as soon as he conveniently could.

This resulted in the shot fired at Ree, who was mistaken for Theodore Hatch because he was riding the Quaker's mare, on that day when Hatch had been accidentally caught in the wolf trap. And Ree Kingdom had shot and wounded Killdeer, in turn.

The hatred the lone Indian had for all white persons made Kingdom's subsequent effort to

win the friendship of the Redskin absolutely useless. He had been taught nothing but to hate venomously every person whose skin was white—taught by Captain Pipe himself, to spare not one, even as the white men had spared not one Indian at the massacre of the Moravians.

So had Killdeer escaped from the cabin of the young traders though he was severely wounded. It was easy, however, for him to launch the canoe he found so convenient to the river, and to float with the current to the camp of the Chippewas near Lake Erie.

It was easy for him to enlist the services of warriors, some of whom were still in the flush of their bloody success over Gen. St. Clair's army. He had only to tell them that there were two horses to be secured and that these young Palefaces had been trying to kill him.

The attack upon the cabin followed. What the further result would have been, excepting for the timely return of Captain Pipe and the other Delawares, is easy to guess. Kingdom and Jerome would have been obliged to flee from

their home or they might not have had a chance even to do that.

It was Captain Pipe who put his foot down and said what should and should not be done, that morning when Killdeer and several of his Chippewa allies visited the Delaware town in search of food, having left five of their party in the woods to see that the white boys did not escape from the cabin.

The Chippewas did not remain at the town of the Delawares, but soon returned to Lake Erie. Killdeer was at home among the Delawares and had scarcely left the town from the day of the attack on the young pioneers' cabin to this day of the attack he had made by himself upon poor Theodore Hatch and on the murderer of Great Thunder. He had been painfully hurt in the battle at the cabin. Ring, the dog, had leaped upon him and, although killed at last, had undoubtedly saved the life of the Quaker when the lone Indian sought to reach him as he stood in the open door.

Thus it was that Killdeer, having seen Duff

disappear into the woods, slackened his pace, planning to catch the fellow more easily by stratagem than, in his own weakened condition, he could do in an open chase. By no means did he lose sight of his intended victim, however. Even when Duff was looking back and thanking his stars that he had left the Indian behind, Killdeer was not so far away but that he could hear the white man running over the leaves and through the brush, though he himself made scarcely a sound as he kept within a certain distance behind, two hundred yards or so to the right of Duff's trail.

Unarmed, save for his tomahawk and the knife at his belt, for he had slipped away from the Delaware town without the knowledge of Captain Pipe, the lone Indian was too cautious to fight the white man whom he meant that day, after weeks of waiting, to kill, except by taking him by surprise. He was puzzled, therefore, when suddenly he discovered that he could no longer hear the noise of the Paleface running among the leaves and brush.

Intently he listened, then with utmost caution, lest he himself be taken by suprise, he searched for Duff's trail. Not finding it at once, he went back in the direction of the cabin, then turned aside and found his own trail with which he knew that the path of the man he sought ran parallel.

Hurrying forward, doubting and anxious—fearful that the murderer of Great Thunder might have escaped, he did not see or hear Duff running toward him, going back to the cabin, until the fellow was less than fifty yards distant.

Simultaneously the Paleface and the Indian—the murderer and the avenger—discovered each other.

With a furious yell Killdeer bounded to one side and with a cry of mingled terror and disappointment Duff changed his slow trot to the fastest running of which he was capable.

Startled by the belief which rushed upon him that the white man had procured arms and had turned back to meet him, Killdeer was taken as

much by surprise as was Duff, and put a tree between himself and the Paleface so swiftly that the latter did not see how he could have so instantly disappeared; but he did not stop to find out, and by the time the Indian was certain that the white man was not hunting him, but seeking to avoid and escape him, the murderer of Great Thunder was far in advance upon the road to the shelter he hoped to find with the two boys who had already done so much more for him than he deserved.

Killdeer himself was not at his best physically or he would have found it easier to overtake his man. The wounds inflicted by the dog of the pioneer boys were not yet healed, but he ran swiftly, notwithstanding.

Duff heard him drawing nearer, and did his utmost. If only he could reach the clearing, he thought, he would be safe. As he came to the hill sloping down to the open space about the cabin, he looked back. The Indian was not far behind and gaining fast. He felt his strength to be almost gone, and his breath came in such

short, painful gasps he scarcely dared spend any of it in a cry for aid, but as he entered the clearing and neither of the boys was in sight, he sent forth a despairing shriek.

What followed has been told.

Hope rose in Duff's heart as he saw both boys come running from the cabin, Kingdom having his rifle.

Killdeer would give up the race now, he was sure. Unconsciously he slackened his mad pace, and his death came a second or two sooner for his having done so.

He thought Ree would never fire. He feared that at any instant the Indian might hurl his hatchet and end it all.

Another frantic cry for succor he gave, and then another, not in words, for he could not speak—but an awful wail of pleading, hope, penitence and abject fear combined.

As though it were an echo of his cry, consigning him to the fate he merited, came the voice of John Jerome and the fateful words, ringing in an unnatural key, weird and dismal—"I think

I've done pretty well, and my blasted arm's played out; go on in the same way!"

As the awful sentence was spoken and the bullet from Kingdom's rifle flew wide, Duff must have realized that there was no hope for him. His terrible temper was fired, and his sudden, furious anger found vent in the most violent cursing, though he scarce could speak.

He abruptly wheeled about and made for Killdeer as though to tear him to pieces with his bare hands. A horrible, exultant cry of triumph met him. It was his death knell and he knew it.

Even before the hatchet, still red with the blood of Theodore Hatch, had descended upon his head, Duff had fallen to his knees. He raised both hands either in pitiful supplication or to ward off the impending blow.

Whatever his purpose, his movement was useless. Swift and sure the deadly tomahawk came down, and the triumphant cry of the son of Great Thunder rang in the murderer's ears as the weapon went crashing through his skull.

Kingdom paused to reload the moment he had

discharged his rifle. John Jerome stopped beside him. With the greatest haste Ree sought to be able to fire again before too late. He had not intended to shoot wide of the mark; but now he saw he could do nothing with the rifle save use it as a club, and again dashed forward.

He was not more than thirty feet from Duff when the latter received the death blow. Jerome was close beside him.

One hurried glance the young Indian gave the boys, then like a shaft from a bow sped to the cover of the trees and was gone.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SECRET OF THE SADDLE BAGS.

No need was there for Ree and John to ask each other whether Duff was dead or only wounded. As they stood over his emaciated body, still clothed in Indian garb, and looked upon his pale, disfigured face now wet with blood, the marks of death were all too plainly seen.

He lay on his side as he had fallen, the cry of terror and despair which last had passed his lips still stamped upon his features. It was terrible to have witnessed his doom and to see the inanimate body lying there like that of some wild beast slain in the woods; but to both the boys there came the thought that heaven had

sent this punishment to the murderer—that Fate had helped Killdeer to avenge in a most tragic manner the killing of Great Thunder, his father.

Not knowing that Killdeer had been near the cabin, the two friends were now more than ever convinced that Duff had killed Theodore Hatch. After committing the assault, they reasoned, he had fled into the woods, had met Killdeer, and then had sought to regain the shelter of the cabin. That he had gone unarmed, taking not even his own rifle, they attributed to some strange carelessness or forgetfulness on his part, in his haste to escape after securing the snuff box containing the fortune letter.

"Two bodies to bury; we will make Duff's grave beside Quilling's," said John very soberly. The two tragedies of the morning had affected him so, he scarcely spoke above a whisper.

"I wish we had coffins to bury the dead in," Kingdom answered. "It seems so inhuman to put the bodies right into the ground. It was

not so bad in the case of Quilling when there was so much snow. Let's carry this poor fellow to the house, and we will make a coffin for him and for Mr. Hatch, too. It won't take so very long."

As he almost always did, John agreed to Ree's suggestion and in a little while the blanket which covered the remains of the Quaker also covered the body of him, who, the boys believed, had caused Mr. Hatch's death.

In a pouch Duff had carried the boys found the silver snuff box and in it the half of the fateful letter which Ichabod Nesbit had had. Nothing else did they find upon the murderer's body. The other half of the fortune letter—the half which had been taken from Theodore Hatch far back at the Eagle tavern months before, and which Duff was supposed to have had in his possession—was missing.

"But it might be a good thing if we were to eat some breakfast, while we talk about it," said John with a feeble smile as the absence of the

letter was being discussed. "I'm nearly starving."

"The letter may be at the cave where Duff stayed," Ree suggested. "He may have been afraid to bring it with him, for he did not, of course, know how we would receive him. But although all this trouble has come from our having taken him in, I would do just the same another time. You can't turn away a human being who is cold and hungry and sick, no matter how bad a man he is."

As they were eating their long delayed breakfast Ree told John of that talk he had with Duff earlier in the morning, which, although it had not made a deep impression on him at the time, he now recalled vividly. It only added to the mystery of the action of Theodore Hatch in throwing away his saddle bags, and to the unexplained connection between the Quaker and Duff which, as the boys now believed, had prompted Mr. Hatch to wish to make them believe Killdeer had committed the fatal assault

upon him, when they were certain it was the almost equally villainous white man.

"At any rate, Ree, if that treasure is ever found, we would be entitled to it," John suggested reflectively, "because Mr. Hatch said that all that was his should be ours, and then Duff also told you that he wanted you to have his share of it—which is all of it, he said. And as Mr. Hatch and Duff were the only persons we know of making any claim to the fortune—"

"John," Ree interrupted, "I should not be surprised to find that that story of the buried money as told in that letter is only a scheme to hide something else. I doubt whether there is any hidden fortune such as the writing, or what we have seen of it, describes, in existence. But maybe we will find out something when we look through the papers which were in the saddle bags. I was thinking that the first thing we ought to do would be to bury Mr. Hatch and Duff, but I don't believe that would be wise. We ought to find out more about them both first, if we can. For there may be some reason for having their

graves as far apart as possible, or a reason why it would be fitting to have them near together. I was sure when Duff came to the cabin, just by the way he and Mr. Hatch acted toward each other, that they already had met somewhere before, and then when Duff talked to me as he did, I knew I was right."

"And I think we should let Captain Pipe know that Killdeer is on the war-path again. I'm afraid of that chap," John put in, changing the subject. "What a lot we have to do to-day! For I tell you, I shan't sleep in this house till—till they are buried," and the lad nodded in the direction of the bed and the two forms covered up upon it.

"We will look at these papers first," said Ree, taking them down from the rough mantel where they had been placed, and pushing the remnants of their breakfast to one side to make room upon the table.

With deep interest and curiosity John drew his stool close beside his friend's and with his

arm over Ree's shoulder leaned down to read with him all that they might find.

The piece of faded paper on which the name of Ichabod Nesbit had been noticed was the first picked up. The writing was in a man's hand and was that of a person of some education; but the contents of the document soon became so interesting that the boys noticed nothing else.

The letter bore the date April 11, 1785. It was full of references to favors which had been performed for Ichabod Nesbit by the writer and begged him to name a place of meeting and there make a fair division of "Aunt Harriet's estate."

Further the writer pointed out that "Aunt Harriet" was as much indebted to himself as to Nesbit for the property she had accumulated, and that except for himself "the old lady" would never have saved any money but would have "let it all go as fast as it came in."

Lastly the letter said: "I only hope you will get this in time. I've got to trust to chance; for I swear I shall have what's coming to me, no

matter what it costs. You know me well enough to know what that means, and to know that I mean it, when I say that if I do not hear from you within twelve months I shall *get a pig ready for market.* Remember.

"SAMUEL DUFF."

"Duff! Do you s'pose that's our Duff—the one here?" asked John Jerome wonderingly, as they finished reading the letter. "What does it mean?"

"Let's look further," Ree answered, intensely interested.

He picked up another document, the seal of which was already broken, as was true of all the others, and saying, "We will see who the writer is before we begin, that we may understand the meaning better as we go along," turned to the bottom of the last closely written page. The signature was "Aunt Harriet."

The letter bore the date of Philadelphia, July 30, 1783, and was addressed to "Samuel Duff, in the care of our good friend, Theodore Hatch."

The writing was a woman's.

"My dear Samuel," the missive ran; "I have long hoped to see you in person and tell you my plans, but I cannot wait longer. More than six months ago—it was in midwinter—I learned by chance that certain things, which we supposed were secrets, had become public. It worried me a great deal. Since then I have also heard of the untimely end of one of our friends, as you know, and all the spring last past there came and went a spot on the cellar floor which was a deep brownish red as though a pig had been got ready for market there and the stains would not rub out. Truly, Samuel, I have become so nervous, what with these things and extremely disquieting reports I have heard concerning the actions of some whom we do not trust, that I am leaving America forever.

"I shall see you never again and it will be of no use for you to look for me. Not one person this side of the ocean knows where I am going, excepting only myself. Our little property I am dividing among you and Ichabod and James and myself. James' share, however, I shall put with mine, for—poor gentleman—he will never need it now. And our good friend Mr. Hatch, to whom I am intrusting this letter, will also deliver to you the half of a document giving a

complete description of the spot where I have deposited the property to be divided between you and Ichabod.

"Now do make an effort to be again on friendly terms with your half-brother, as I fear your hasty temper will yet be the death of you. I am sending to him the other half of the letter wherein I describe the place where I have hidden the chest of valuables. Thus, you and he must meet, at least, even though you do not become friends (which, for our mutual welfare, I earnestly hope you may), before either of you will be able to obtain the property I am leaving for you. Indeed, Samuel, had you only remained as friends and brothers, I should probably not be driven to leave you and him for good and all. But 'a house divided against itself cannot stand.' I only hope you will do well. And now I bid you an affectionate farewell.

"Your Aunt Harriet."

"P. S.—I have compensated Mr. Hatch for the trouble he is taking for me. I only tell you this that you will not think it necessary to pay him for his services."

"Stranger yet!" exclaimed John Jerome. "Why, Ree, Mr. Hatch said that he was Ichabod Nesbit's half-brother, himself, and that their

'Aunt Harriet' had hidden her property for them to divide between them when she fled to England soon after the war broke out! And see! this letter is dated 1783!"

"And you remember, John," said Ree quietly, "that Mr. Hatch said he had sinned 'so grievously'; I believe he was not fair by Duff! Certainly Duff never received this letter which was addressed to him!"

Three or four other manuscripts which the boys examined threw no new light on the subject. One was a letter which was unsigned but written in the same woman's hand as that addressed to Duff, in which the writer thanked the Quaker for having been ever a true friend who asked no questions but trusted those about him, and urged him, no matter what evil reports he might hear concerning Ichabod Nesbit and Samuel Duff, or the writer herself, not to believe them.

Another letter was written by Samuel Duff and made inquiry for Ichabod Nesbit and "Aunt Harriet," Duff being at that time in

New York and much in need of money, it appeared.

"There may be something in this, that it is wrapped up and tied so carefully," suggested John, picking up a small roll of neatly dressed buckskin and proceeding to open it.

"Why, it has writing on it!" Ree exclaimed, as his eye fell upon the smooth surface of the skin, folded inside but now revealed to his vision. "And it is addressed 'My dear young friends,'" he added. "I believe it is for us!"

The writing was for the boys, as they soon learned. With deep interest they read the lines, pale and indistinct in places, dauby and black in others, written with some sort of home-made ink, manufactured principally from charcoal and powder and water, apparently. The message was as follows:

"My dear young friends:—Strange are the workings of Providence and strange thou wilt believe them to be when thou shalt have read this which I may write, but verily, have not the heart to tell thee by word of mouth. After many sins have I been strangely led

into this wilderness to find my life work, which is to teach the Delaware Indians the true life. To that end my every effort shall henceforth be directed. My home shall be with the children of the free forest, and I am leaving thee thanking thee both for many kindnesses to me.

"Now must I tell thee my wretched secret, that with a clean heart I may begin my better work. I have sinned grievously. A woman, who I falsely told you was my Aunt Harriet, left in my charge two letters—one for Ichabod Nesbit, one for Samuel Duff—half-brothers—her nephews. I had known the family for a great many years, though not intimately. She was suddenly leaving for England never to return. One letter I delivered—the one addressed to I. Nesbit. The other being not called for at once, I yielded to the temptation and the curiosity which beset me, and opened and read it.

"I thus found out that a fortune had been concealed near Philadelphia. I learned afterward, as I secretly searched for information, that as highway robbers and plunderers of the settlers and Indians, Nesbit and Duff had accumulated the property. Their aunt, Harriet Wood, was their assistant inasmuch as she kept their plunder for them. The hanging of a member of this

company, the man James Thorpe, for murder, gave Miss Wood such a fright, however, that she decided to flee to England. Adding to her fright, also, was some unusual phenomenon—a blotch of dampness upon the floor of her cellar—'as if a pig had been got ready for market there' as she said, which means in the cipher language she and her nephews employed for the sake of secrecy, 'as if a man had been murdered there'—butchered as a pig is butchered for market.

"Much I thought of the hidden treasure and knowing that the gold and jewels which made it up were stolen, I reasoned that it was mine as much as anybody's. But I could not find it. Still I hoped to succeed in my search some day, and when at last Samuel Duff came to me I falsely told him that Ichabod Nesbit had secured all his aunt's fortune, and I did not give him the letter I had for him.

"A quarrel between the two half-brothers had occurred a long time before, and Samuel Duff, therefore, readily believed all I told him. He made violent threats to murder Ichabod Nesbit, demanding a settlement. Years passed, and learning that Ichabod had been killed by Indians, and hearing no more of Samuel Duff, I undertook to find the half of the document de-

scribing the fortune's hiding place, which had been in Nesbit's possession.

"Mr. Quilling, the landlord, told me how Nesbit always carried the letter in a snuff box and probably had had it with him when he met his death. Therefore I set out to find the body. How Quilling stole the half of the letter I had and then sent for Samuel Duff, whom he knew very well, though he did not let me know that, thou knowest, dear friends, and my story is told.

"By what temptation I was prompted to put myself in the place of Samuel Duff and so say I was Ichabod Nesbit's half-brother, when first I told thee of myself, I do not know. Throughout my life I have been fighting a devil which is within me, which ever leads me away from proper paths. But now I have conquered. I am to give my life to the teaching and uplifting of the Indians, and that gold which is buried must remain buried. It has caused only trouble. Samuel Duff must search for it alone and he will not find it; and he dare not trouble me, knowing as he does that information which is mine would be the means of hanging him.

"So, my dear young friends, farewell. I shall see

thee sometimes about the Indian town, and shall ever pray for thee both for thy kindnesses to me.

"THEODORE HATCH."

"Mr. Hatch wrote this one day not long ago while we were both away. I saw him have a quill that day, at least," said Kingdom triumphantly, when he and John had deciphered the last sentence, and stood looking at each other in astonishment.

"And then he changed his mind again," said John sadly, smiling as he remembered how changeable the old gentleman was and how hard it had been for him to do what he knew to be right, though he really tried, because of the fascination the hidden treasure had for him. "And I believe he was crazy, too," he added.

"And to think that after all the crimes they committed, all the dangers they were in, and after all their other troubles, not one of those men ever had the use of the money they wrongfully came by," said Kingdom thoughtfully. "Quilling and Dexter, and now Duff and Mr. Hatch have all been killed on account of the

buried treasure. Honestly, John, I doubt whether we would better ever try to find it."

"But anyhow, I am glad to know what was in those saddle bags," said John, thinking aloud. "The wonder is that Mr. Hatch kept those letters! I suppose, though, that every time he made up his mind to burn them up or something, just that often he changed his mind."

CHAPTER XIV

KILLDEER'S LAST FIGHT.

For some time the two boys talked of the strange chain of circumstances which had brought the well-meaning, really pious, but weak-willed Quaker and the unscrupulous robber and murderer Duff, whom he had so deceived, to lie cold in death together far in the forest's depths. Their voices were hushed and solemn in the presence of the dead, and as they recalled the tragic events of the morning and Ree told of the dreams of which Duff had spoken and the fear the outlaw had expressed that Killdeer would succeed in killing him, John said:

"But surely now we have seen the last of that

lone Indian. Such a puzzle, and such a sneaking fellow!"

"We shall have no more trouble with him, I hope," Kingdom answered. "The only thing to fear is that he will make an effort to get Duff's scalp, and there is no good reason why he should have it."

To refresh themselves and brighten their thoughts both boys presently walked into the outer air. Had they been keenly alert they might have seen a human figure glide swiftly back from the edge of the clearing as they did so.

For Killdeer still thirsted for revenge. He remembered that the dog of the white boys had fiercely bitten him and lacerated his skin with sharp claws. He remembered that one of the boys had shot and wounded him. Unhappily for him he did not remember, or at least disregarded, the order Captain Pipe had given that he must not molest the young traders or their friends; and another dreadful tragedy was to be enacted within the little clearing—within this

spot of civilization far in the wilderness—this day.

It was John who suggested that word be carried to Captain Pipe informing him of the death of Mr. Hatch and Duff. Especially would he be interested in knowing that Killdeer had killed the murderer of Great Thunder, at last, and knowing that, he might persuade the lone Indian to cease the wicked war he waged. So he mounted Neb and started for the Delaware town. He would greatly have preferred to ride Phœbe but felt that to do so would be too bad when the intelligent, pretty creature was mourning the master she so dearly loved, and so contented himself with the slower horse.

It was a clear, cool day and John was truly glad to make the journey on which he started. Indeed, he pitied Ree as the latter came out with his axe and a maul and wedges, intending to split puncheons from which to make rough coffins for the burying of the dead; but he said "good-bye" quite cheerfully and soon disap-

peared over the hill toward the home of the Delawares.

Near the border of the forest the boys had left two ash logs capable of being split into rough lumber, and these Ree attacked with axe and wedges. Soon he had removed both his hat and coat, he was so warmed by the vigor of his work. And as his industriousness helped him, too, to forget for the time the awful objects covered by the blanket in the cabin, he even whistled while he mauled in the wedges, cracking the logs into long, rough slabs or boards.

The hour of noon passed quickly by and rapidly the afternoon was wearing away. With his task nearly finished Ree presently straightened up to look and listen for John's return.

He thought he heard a slight rustle of leaves in the woods behind him, but looking around and seeing nothing he told himself he must not be so nervous, and again bent over his work. Again he thought he heard a twig crackle and snap, but he did not look up this time, and in another second there whizzed through the air

with terrific force a heavy hatchet of stone. The handle struck Kingdom on the shoulder, the head of the weapon just missing the base of his skull, and went crashing upon the puncheons before him.

From surprise more than from the blow Ree nearly fell to the ground, but instantly recovered himself. One rapid glance showed him whence the hatchet had come and a strong leap carried him to the stump against which his rifle leaned; but before he could seize the weapon the hands of Killdeer were about his neck and he was borne heavily to the ground.

A look of hate, fierce and deep, was on the Indian's face as he knelt upon the boy and tried to change his hold in such a way as to clutch his victim's throat. If anything were needed to show Kingdom that nothing short of his death and scalp would satisfy this savage whom he had tried to befriend, the short, panting breath of the Indian, hot upon his cheeks, was all-sufficient.

The thought of Killdeer's many bloody deeds

rushed through the boy's mind and as he remembered his base ingratitude, anger of the kind which is dangerous and powerful grew in Ree's heart. With set teeth and in his brain that unyielding determination which he had exhibited upon some similar occasions, he rose by sheer muscular force partially to his feet, carrying the Indian with him despite the latter's struggles. He secured the freedom of one hand at last and turning partially about tried to grasp the painted madman's throat. But the quickness of the savage prevented this. His movements were like lightning.

In a trice the Indian had himself secured the hold he had been trying for—a choking grip just under Ree's chin. Like a vice his sinewy fingers tightened and the boy knew their grasp meant death.

Never had he seemed so powerless to help himself. He caught sight of the black circles upon the arm of the savage and wondered how many would be there next day. He shuddered within himself at the thought, but still put forth

his every energy. He could not break the Indian's hold, and as they rolled over and over upon the ground in the violence of their struggle, their positions changing constantly, he entirely failed to catch the savage in any way which would loosen the grip of death upon him.

Already Kingdom's eyes were forced nearly from their sockets and his face was blue-black from the choking. The end—the end of life—must come in a few seconds if this continued; he could not breathe nor see. With strength born of desperation he rose again partially to his feet lifting Killdeer above him.

Now they were on their knees. Quick as a cat Ree's hands flew for the Indian's neck. No less quickly the savage saw his intention and thrust him back. Killdeer's was the longer reach, and fight as he would, Kingdom could do nothing;—the Indian was holding him at arm's length, both hands viciously clutching him beneath the chin.

Darkness came before the white boy's eyes and he tried in vain to put down the fainting

feeling which crept fast and faster over him. He was losing consciousness and knew it. In a minute more all would be over.

Yet once again Ree sought to exert the tremendous power of his will—his determination—which had twice before been the means of saving his life. He recovered his senses enough to hear, or to think he heard, the pounding of flying hoofs upon the frozen ground—to see, or to think he saw, a great, sorrel horse thundering toward him across the clearing and Captain Pipe astride the animal, his hair and garments and feathers waving in the wind, his left hand guiding the excited stallion, his right swinging a tomahawk at arm's length above his head, his eyes like balls of fire.

Was it some vision of his almost over-powered senses as they struggled against yielding to the awful pressure upon his throat?

Killdeer gave the flying horse and rider no heed. Perhaps he did not see them—perhaps in the depth of his awful desire for blood he did

not care; and in another second an awful yell of wrath and horror split the air.

The great sorrel reared suddenly erect upon its haunches, so violently and quickly was its swift race ended, and instantaneously Captain Pipe, still swinging the war axe high in the air, was upon the ground. With crushing force and rapidity he brought the tomahawk down, and the skull of Killdeer was broken as a thin shell beneath a giant's hammer.

The chief of the Delawares, seated on the puncheons Ree had been splitting, was calmly wiping his hatchet with a tuft of dry grass when the boy whose life he had saved by a hair's breadth of time, sat up a few seconds later, and completely bewildered, looked about him.

There lay Killdeer, a great, gaping hole in his head, dead upon the ground. Here were the frozen earth and the leaves torn and scattered by the recent combat. Close by, the sorrel stallion of the chief grazed upon the withered herbage, and there was Captain Pipe himself, cool

and indifferent as though nothing had happened.

Very soon, however, Ree remembered everything and the pain at his throat assured him that he remembered rightly. Without a word he arose and held out to Captain Pipe his hand.

"Ugh!"

With no other expression the Indian acknowledged the boy's show of gratitude.

"The Great Spirit must have sent you, Captain Pipe," said Ree very soberly. "In about another minute, or less, it would have been all over with me."

"Killdeer heard the words of Hopocon," the old chief answered. "Killdeer was told to go not near the cabin of our young white brothers. Little Wolf and Flying Fish had seen the Paleface Quaker whose scalp was gone. 'Killdeer is but a woman who scalps the wounded and runs away in fear,' they said, and pointed their fingers at the son of Great Thunder to plague him.

"Even as a child, Killdeer was angered. In

the night he left his lodge—left the town of the Delawares. Only Hopocon knew where he had gone when the squaws and the young bucks talked of the lodge which was empty. It was to kill him whose scalp he carried, whose death was marked also upon the skin of his arm, though he still lived, that Killdeer had stolen away in the night time, leaving even his rifle that the women, seeing it, would say, 'He is not far from here.'

"So did Hopocon come to give warning to the young Palefaces who gave food to the women of the Delawares. Hopocon does not forget. Always he remembers the goodness of the white brothers. Also he remembers Killdeer whom he taught to be brave and to make war; whom he fed and protected that the killing of Great Thunder might never be forgotten. And Killdeer heard the words of Hopocon to keep far from the cabin of the friends of the Delawares; yet he heeded them not; and he lies there."

The thought came to Kingdom's mind that

Hopocon was excusing himself in this speech for the killing of Killdeer; but he learned later that the famous Delaware had not the least regret for what he had done. His sense of justice was most acute, and while those who harmed him or his must suffer for it, and their friends were in no less danger, those who befriended him or his, and their near friends, were ever certain of his protection at whatever cost.

John Jerome, who had missed finding Captain Pipe at the Indian village, returned while the chief and Ree were talking. His astonishment as he learned what had occurred was complete. But as he became calm and joined in the conversation with Ree and the chief he agreed with them that it no doubt was Killdeer, after all, who killed Theodore Hatch, and then taking up the trail of the fleeing Duff had ended his life, also, arousing the passions in his heart so greatly that he resolved to exterminate all the Palefaces in the vicinity at once.

The presence of Captain Pipe and the certainty that peace was before them, emphasized

by the chief's promise, helped the young settlers to look back upon the dreadful events of this day, now closing, with infinitely greater calmness than they otherwise could have done, but they were filled with gloom and horror still.

The chieftain ate some cold meat with them, but declining to remain longer said good-bye, leaving the boys to the unhappy task of burying the dead. A half hour later, however, he returned, and without a word placed the cold form of Killdeer across his horse's shoulders and again mounting, rode away.

Never again did Ree and John see the lone Indian nor did they learn what disposition was made of his body.

"I shall not sleep in the cabin to-night," John declared as Ree went in to prepare a warm supper. Nor did he. Maybe it was only to humor his chum that Kingdom also wrapped himself in a blanket and spent the night upon the ground near the open door.

Neither slept much, but they were more comfortable out of doors, they were sure; though

Ree would have vehemently denied that he had any fear or superstitious dread because of the two faces the blanket covered, inside the cabin.

John went to the cave where Duff had made his home, while Ree finished the task of making the rude, box-like coffins, next day, to search for the missing half of the fortune letter. He returned empty-handed.

"It stands to reason that Duff kept that letter about him somewhere," said Kingdom as they talked the matter over.

Without ado he made a careful search. Secure and dry in a buckskin band fastened about the dead robber's waist, beneath his clothing, the document was found.

John could scarcely repress an exclamation of delight.

"I've dreamed many a time about that buried treasure, Ree, and have thought more about it than you ever guessed. Something—fascination—the mystery of it—I don't know what, made me wish we could find it. And now we have the whole letter! But honestly, I don't

care half so much about it now as I did before."

Ree looked at his friend in an odd, thoughtful way for a full second.

"We have been, and are, of just about the same mind, John," he said.

"But let's put the two halves together and see how the secret does read, anyway," Jerome suggested. "I believe, though, I almost know what the half we first found says, by heart."

In another minute the halves of that letter which had caused so much bloodshed and suffering were side by side. And this is what the two boys read:

Buried near Philadelphia is a casket containing upwards of one thousand pounds sterling and hidden with it is other gold and silver, not to mention several pieces of plate, of value not to exceed two hundred pounds. As explained to both of you in separate letters to each, my dear nephews, this fortune is for you when you shall have placed the halves of this letter together, and are able to locate the treasure which I have secreted for you. It will never be claimed by me as I shall never again return to this country, nor have I in the nature of things, more than a few years to

live. Quite like I shall never see either of you again, but the gold I have placed in a cedar box or chest and the jewels and silver are with it. Now I shall tell you how to find the casket. Twelve miles from the Bunch of Grapes inn on the road directly west, is a woodland which you will know by the many charred stumps of partially burned trees, caused by a fire sweeping through the forest there some years ago and doing a great deal of damage to the farmers, as any one can tell you. But I need not mention that now. It is a lonely, isolated spot, but you will not need to go at night to dig for the buried treasure. Growing not more than a stone's throw, or perhaps a very little farther, from the road are three large elm trees close together. There are no other such thereabout. The money and valuables I have described are buried twelve yards directly east, thence twelve yards directly north of the tallest of the three trees, which is on the right hand side as you approach from the highroad. A patch of mullen has grown up all about the spot where the chest is hidden. Seek and ye shall find, only as I have said to you in my separate letters to each of you, if you do not both share in this property, as I have been at such pains to arrange for you to do, the gold and the silver and the jewels and all shall be the property of whom-

soever may find them. But I have seen to it that the chest was buried too deep for the plowshares ever to turn it out, and very likely it will never be found unless by some strange fortune, some one other than yourselves should be the ones to put together the two halves of this letter.

"She must have been a pretty shrewd woman," was Ree's comment as together they finished reading the strange document. "See how she describes the property, as though it were such as might be found in any well-to-do family, while the fact is that it was stolen! It is like the letters signed 'Aunt Harriet'—one who did not know would think that they were written by some nice, motherly old lady, honest as could be."

CHAPTER XV

THE TREASURE CHEST.

In separate graves on the hillside Ree and John buried the earthly remains of Theodore Hatch and Samuel Duff. The latter's grave was near that of the unfortunate Quilling, but the Quaker's last resting place was by itself.

As the earth fell upon the rude coffin in the shallow trench dug to receive it, never was there a more solemn funeral party. With all his faults the boys loved the kindly old gentleman whose life they had been the means of saving, though to little purpose, and Phœbe made

a third member of the little group mourning beside the grave. No one knew better than the dapple-gray that the perplexities of life and the unhappy struggle between right and wrong which had for years distressed him would trouble the gentle, kindly, erring Quaker, her master, never more.

How very quiet it seemed about the cabin after all that had occurred, when peace, serene and deep, settled upon the wilderness home of the two boys! Neither could cease to speak of it.

They had no difficulties now with any of the Indians, although the Delawares and those of other tribes who were passing, often visited them. There was not much for the lads to do as traders, however.

The battle with St. Clair and the expectation that there would soon be more fighting kept the Indians busy planning and talking of the war-path. Many of them were in war paint constantly. They did not, as a result, do a great deal of hunting and as few had made expeditions in search of game during the winter, they

had only occasional pelts to exchange for merchandise.

But as spring came the young settlers found plenty to do upon their land. Often they chopped and burned all day long at clearing land and soon, also, a rail fence was being built about a part of the clearing to enclose a garden. Then came the maple sugar making time and the fine spring days when the fishing was too fine to be neglected. To the very best the boys improved the season and were busy and happy as beavers.

One subject, notwithstanding their being so occupied with other things, was spoken of almost every day by the two friends. It was the buried treasure. They would not admit even to themselves that the knowledge of hidden gold possessed for them any such fascination as it had had for Theodore Hatch, drawing him from the paths of honesty, but there was something about the topic which made such conversations of never failing interest.

Sometimes they recalled the fact that the only

two men who made any claim to the treasure, the Quaker and Duff, had virtually made verbal wills in their favor—Duff as he talked to Ree on that last fateful morning, and Mr. Hatch on many occasions; and they properly considered the hidden casket as their own property, should they be unable to find a more rightful owner.

John Jerome was anxious to go to Philadelphia at the earliest opportunity and search for the fortune. Ree was more inclined to let that subject drop. At last they reached an agreement which suited both. It was that as soon as their spring crops were planted they would take the furs they had collected to Pittsburg to market, and then on horseback make a quick trip to Philadelphia. If they found the golden treasure for which they were to search, and their ownership thereof was not questioned, they would go thence to Connecticut to spend a little time with their old friends. If they failed to find the cedar chest of riches they would lose no time in returning West and no one would be the wiser.

It was after a visit to the Delaware town and repeated assurances of friendship from Captain Pipe and Gentle Maiden and others of the Indians that, leaving presents for these dusky friends, the young traders once more said goodbye to their forest home.

It was early in June and all nature was at its best. The wild flowers sprinkled the ground and birds were busy from dawn till sunset with their music. And there was sunshine in the hearts of the two boys for this and for other reasons. Especially when they passed the spot where Black Eagle killed Ichabod Nesbit and where he was afterward killed himself, did they remember the great reasons they had for being devoutly thankful that, though they had come through many dangers and hardships, they had suffered no permanent injury whatever; and, also, that they were the only ones of the seven persons, including Black Eagle, who had passed the frontier and crossed the track of Killdeer, the previous autumn, now remaining alive.

Leaving their cart behind, the young traders

were traveling on horseback, Ree mounted on Phœbe and John on old Neb, while each horse bore as additional burdens packs of furs and their camp outfit. The latter was no great load —only a frying pan and a blanket or two, a tinder box and a small box of salt, medicines, etc. So the boys made excellent progress and except for a short rest at noon, were on the march from dawn to sunset of the long June days. The mosquitoes, which, especially at night, were very troublesome, were the only enemies the young travelers found, and without adventure they reached Pittsburg in a little less than four days.

It was a real pleasure to the boys to shake hands with Tall Todd, Eli Hopp, the landlord and other friends about the ancient fort and village, and it was a real pleasure to sit down at some one's else table after having been doing their own cooking for so long. Then, too, it was pleasant to tell Tall Todd of adventures they had had, he was so shrinking and timid himself, and his exclamations of astonishment were so

vehement, his wonder that both lads had not been killed at least a dozen times, so great.

To those in authority at the rough frontier town Ree and John gave a brief but careful account of the deaths of Theodore Hatch, Samuel Duff and Quilling and Dexter, and told of the killing of Killdeer and Black Eagle.

Through some Indians the information that Killdeer was dead, and that he was the one who had been responsible for the killing of so many hunters and traders, had already been received at the town. Confirmation of the report, as given by the pioneers, was most welcome intelligence; for, in many years, there had been no one Indian who had caused so much trouble along the border as this son of the murdered Great Thunder.

Ree and John had no trouble in disposing of their furs, and lingering in Pittsburg only a couple of days, they headed toward Philadelphia.

At sundown on a Saturday evening about a fortnight later, the two friends reached the

"City of Brotherly Love," at that time the capital of the nation, and riding into the metropolis along one of the western roads, chanced to see a sign, "The Bunch of Grapes," hanging upon a well kept old inn or tavern.

Fortune favored the lads in bringing them to the very tavern they sought without the necessity of their attracting attention to themselves by inquiries. For they were the objects of so much notice anyway, by reason of their frontier dress and long hair that Ree was quite bored. John, on the other hand, enjoyed creating a sensation in the minds of those they met, and well he knew that he was the envy of many of the city youths who stared at him.

The boys remained at the Bunch of Grapes over Sunday, keeping a great deal to themselves and studiously refraining from letting the object of their visit to the capital be known, though in their own room they talked a great deal of the hidden treasure. They wondered at first that they had not noticed the burned woodland to which the fortune letter referred, as they

came along the way, but when they remembered, however, that nearly ten years had passed since "Aunt Harriet" buried the treasure, they knew that the place would now be considerably grown up to bushes, if it had not been entirely cleared and turned into cultivated fields.

Prepared to make a thorough search, Ree and John rode away from the inn early Monday morning. By guarded inquiries they had learned enough of the country to know approximately in what locality they would be after traveling twelve miles, and with more anxiety and suppressed excitement than they would have admitted, they galloped over the highroads, so different from the forest trails to which they had been accustomed.

It was the three elm trees which marked for the boys the spot where the gold was hidden. The moment they saw the trees they were sure that they were the ones mentioned in the letter. The surrounding country had changed greatly since the time of the writing of the description of the spot, however, and now the elm trees

stood not in a woodland, but in a field of clover. Not far away was a farm house.

Because of the presence of these evidences of civilization the boys determined to wait until night before digging up the earth, lest they should be interfered with. Before sundown, however, after remaining away from the vicinity during the day, they measured off the distances as given in "Aunt Harriet's" description—twelve yards directly east and then twelve yards north of the tallest of the three trees.

The keen interest with which, under the moonlight of a beautiful June night, Kingdom and Jerome delved into the earth in search of the treasure chest need not be described. An excitement different than they had ever known was upon them; yet knowing that they might find nothing they told each other to be prepared to be disappointed. It was wise to do that, but unnecessary.

The cedar box was found—buried at a depth of nearly two feet. Had a stake and flag marked the place where it lay, the lads could not have

struck the exact location more successfully than they did.

Still moderately well preserved, the wood held firmly together as the chest was lifted from its resting place and carried across the road to the shelter of some trees. There by a lantern's light it was opened, and there in the lantern's pale rays shone gold and silver, in money and jewelry—more wealth than either of the boys had ever seen at one time before. There was a lot of gold and silver coin, but also bars of gold and silver which undoubtedly represented jewelry and plate, melted down. A few diamonds and other precious stones completed the chest's contents.

Not a word of writing was found—not a name or initial on any article the box contained, which would indicate who the owner or owners had been. "Aunt Harriet" had been too shrewd to leave any such clue.

"I feel like a pirate—I positively do," said Ree Kingdom, looking upon the pile of white and golden metal glinting in the lantern light.

"But you are not—neither am I!" exclaimed John, reassuringly. "We have come by this fortune honestly and I think it all right for us to be glad we have found it and all right for us to use it. It would be wrong to let this gold and silver lie buried here, of no use to any one."

Without delay the boys returned to Philadelphia and in a quiet side street secured board and lodging for two weeks. They gave their time to seeing the city and to making careful inquiry for relatives of Duff or Theodore Hatch.

To guard against being lied to by impostors, they did not tell the full purport of their inquiries, but they were unable to locate a single relative of Samuel Duff or the Quaker or "Aunt Harriet." Neither could they find any person who had been robbed by Duff or Ichabod Nesbit or the man Thorpe, who had been hanged.

The only person who could have the least claim upon the hidden treasure, whom the boys could find, was Patrick Dexter—the aged father of him who had been killed after having been led into trouble by the unscrupulous Duff.

Dexter had been not unkind to John during the latter's imprisonment at the cave, and to the old gentleman, therefore, the boys gave money from the treasure chest amounting to $300, and then, having converted all the valuables into cash, they started on horseback for Connecticut.

Arthur Bridges, Tom Fish, Capt. Bowen, Pete Ellis and all their old friends gave Kingdom and Jerome a royal welcome home. John's brothers and sisters and his parents were so exceedingly proud of him that he would have been in great danger of being completely spoiled had it not been for Kingdom's influence preventing anything of the kind. For Ree's smile of amusement whenever John "put on airs" was enough to make the lad himself again at any time. But the young gentleman was a guest of honor at his father's home, notwithstanding.

Kingdom made his home at Capt. Bowen's, for Mrs. Catesby, in whose family he had been reared, was still in town where Miss Mary Catesby was attending school. It was a happy thought on Capt. Bowen's part when he invited

all the old friends of the two boys to his home one evening and the young men were persuaded to tell the story of their adventures.

A few—Tom Fish and Arthur Bridges—had already heard the story; for, remembering that Bridges was a half-brother of Ichabod Nesbit, the boys had at once told him the story of the hidden treasure and asked him to share in the fortune. He refused, however, kindly but emphatically.

The result was that to each of those who came to the gathering in their honor, at Capt. Bowen's home, the boys gave a valuable present of some kind. They were not only glad to be able to make gifts but they wished in that way to show that they were not selfish with the fortune which had so strangely come into their possession.

In all ways they sought to use common sense in the enjoyment of the riches which had fallen to them. Their manliness and generosity and the fact that they spent no money in foolish dis-

play won them the friendship of all who heard of the hidden treasure.

While there were some, as there always are, who, being envious, criticised the boys or secretly hinted that they had not come honestly by their money, the great majority of people who knew them congratulated both, not only upon their having acquired what in those days amounted to a snug competence for both, but upon their escape from the dangers which had surrounded them.

During the several weeks which Ree and John remained in the vicinity of their old home they were much talked about, but not more so, perhaps, than was the intelligence of the mare Phœbe and that animal's deep love for both her young masters. Like a dog the affectionate, docile dapple-gray followed one or the other or both the boys from place to place whenever permitted to do so. At every mention of the name of Theodore Hatch she showed the liveliest interest in what was being said, and often the lads were persuaded to talk of the kind but erring

Quaker only that their friends might watch the light of perfect understanding of all that was said, in the mare's eyes.

And when at last the two friends returned to their forest home they would as soon have thought of leaving their rifles behind as to have gone without Phœbe.

It was in August that they started back. Their money with the exception of that which had been spent for their friends and to fit themselves out for this, their third, trip West, the lads had placed at interest. Some day they would need a part of it to pay for the land on which they had settled, which, up to this time, they owned only by reason of having bought it of the Delawares. And it was for this very purpose that a part of the treasure was in time used.

For Ree Kingdom and John Jerome had made up their minds to grow up with the new Ohio country, and they did. Fortune did not always smile on them; they suffered many hardships and each year, until permanent settle-

ments were established around them, brought its adventures. But they ever found that, even with the Indians, fair dealing was sure to win the best profits in the long run, and it also won for them good names—names that are honored by those who have come after them, and ever shall be.

THE END.

W.B.C.